

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



May 2016

Vol. 121, No. 5

₹ 10.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Uniqueness of Vedanta II*

The Vedanta claims that there has not been one religious inspiration, one manifestation of the divine man, however great, but it has been the expression of that infinite oneness in human nature; and all that we call ethics and morality and doing good to others is also but the manifestation of this oneness. There are moments when every man feels that he is one with the universe, and he rushes forth to express it, whether he knows it or not. This expression of oneness is what we call love and sympathy, and it is the basis of all our ethics and morality. This is summed up in the Vedanta philosophy by the celebrated aphorism, Tat Tvam Asi, 'Thou art That'. To every man, this is taught: Thou art one with this Universal Being, and as such, every soul that exists is your soul; and every body that exists is your body; and in hurting anyone, you hurt yourself, in loving anyone, you love yourself. As soon as a current of hatred is thrown outside, whomsoever else it hurts, it also hurts yourself; and if loves comes out from you, it is bound to come back to you. For I am the universe; this universe is my body. I am the Infinite, only I am not conscious of it now; but I am struggling to get this consciousness of the Infinite and perfection will be reached when full consciousness of this Infinite comes. Another peculiar idea of the Vedanta is that we must allow this infinite variation in religious thought, and not try to bring everybody to the same opinion, because the goal is the same. As the Vedantist says



in his poetical language, 'As so many rivers, having their source in different mountains, roll down, crooked or straight, and at last come into the ocean—so all these various creeds and religions, taking their start from different standpoints and running through crooked or straight courses, at last come unto thee.' As a manifestation of that, we find that this most ancient philosophy as through its influence, directly inspired Buddhism, the first missionary religion of the world, and indirectly, it has also influenced Christianity, through the Alexandrians, the Gnostics, and the European philosophers of the middle ages. And later, influencing German thought, it has produced almost a revolution in the regions of philosophy and psychology. Yet all this mass of influence has been given to the world almost unperceived. As the gentle falling of the dew at night brings support to all vegetable life, so slowly and imperceptibly, this divine philosophy has been spread through the world for the good of mankind.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 1.399–400.



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Swami Tattwavidananda

Editor
Swami Narasimhananda

Associate Editor and Design
Swami Divyakripananda

Production Editor
Swami Chidekananda

Cover Design
Subhabrata Chandra

General Assistance
Swami Vimohananda
Swami Vibhatmananda

Circulation
Indrajit Sinha
Tapas Jana

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Prabuddha Bharata
Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat · 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
Tel: 91 · 96909 98179
prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

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West Bengal, India
Tel: 91 · 33 · 2289 0898
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mail@advaitaashrama.org

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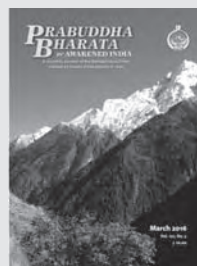
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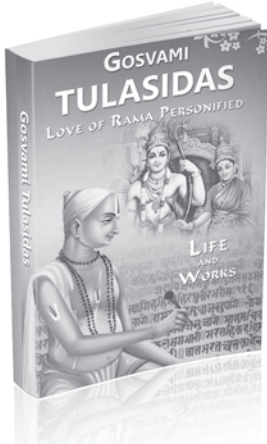


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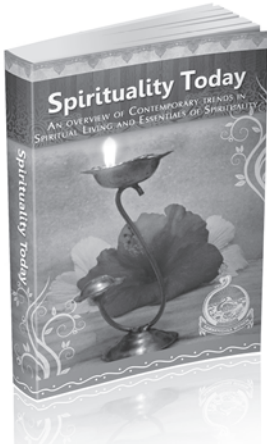
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Spirituality Today

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What is spirituality? As in case of other fields of life, there are authentic and not-so-authentic examples and thoughts about spirituality too. Much needs to be clarified and understood about the true nature of spiritual life, its practices and obstacles. Swami Vivekananda called spirituality as the 'science of spirit'. This book discusses and illustrates the truth about spiritual living through writings by eminent monks and others.

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Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass),
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The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2016. The day of inauguration has been fixed tentatively as 13th November 2016, Sunday.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 15 Crores. So far Rs. 11.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 04.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.

We value your help and co- operation immensely.

Yours in the service of the Lord,

Vishnupadananda

(Swami Vishnupadananda)
Secretary

Proposed Universal Temple of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna



Model of the Proposed New Temple

Temple Dimensions

Length: 156 ft. Breadth: 076 ft. Height: 100 ft.

Temple Construction Area : 18000 Sq.ft.

Garbhagriha : 24ft. x 24ft.

Temple Hall for Prayer and Meditation

70ft. x 40ft. Seating Capacity - 450

Auditorium (Ground Floor)

80ft. x 57ft. Seating Capacity - 500

The entire Temple will be built in Chunar sandstone
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Maitrayaniya Upanishad

May 2016
Vol. 121, No. 5

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तं सम्मोहो भयं विषादो निद्रा तन्द्री प्रमादो जरा शोकः क्षुत्पिपासा कार्पण्यं क्रोधो नास्तिक्यमज्ञानं मात्सर्यं नैष्कारुण्यं मूढत्वं निर्वीडत्वं निराकृतित्वमुद्धतत्वमसमत्वमिति तामसानि । अन्तस्तृष्णा स्नेहो रागो लोभो हिंसा रतिर्द्विष्टिर्व्यावृत्तत्वमीर्ष्याऽकाममस्थिरत्वं चलत्वं व्यग्रत्वं जिगीषाऽर्थोपार्जनं मित्रानुग्रहणं परिग्रहावलम्बोऽनिष्टेष्विन्द्रियार्थेषु द्विष्टिरिष्टेष्वभिष्वङ्गः शुक्तस्वरोऽन्नतमस्त्विति राजसान्येतैः परिपूर्ण एतैरभिभूता इत्ययं भूतात्मा तस्मान्नानारूपाण्याप्नोतीत्याप्नोतीति

॥३.५॥

Athanyatrapy-uktam sammoho bhayam vishado nidra tandri pramado jara shokah kshut-pipasa karpanyam krodho nastikyam-ajnanam matsaryam, naishkarunyam, mudhatvam, nirvridatvam, nirakrititvam-uddhatatvam-asamatvam-iti tamasani. Antastrishna sneho rago lobho hinsa ratir-dvishtir-vyavritatvam-irshya-akamam-asthiratvam chalatvam vyagratvam jigisha'rthoparjanam mitranugrahanam parigraba-avalambo-anishteshv-indriyartheshu dvishtir-ishteshv-abhishvangah shuktasvaro'nnatamastv-iti rajasanyetaih paripurna etairabhibhuta ityayam bhutatma tasman-nana-rupany-apnotiti-apnotiti. (3.5)

‘And it has been said elsewhere also: “Delusion, fear, depression, sleepiness, laziness, carelessness, old age, grief, hunger, thirst, miserliness, anger, non-belief, ignorance, jealousy, cruelty, stupidity, lack of compunction, meanness, rashness, non-equality—these are the characteristics of tamas. Inner thirst, affection, attachment, greed, violence, lust, hatred, deceit, envy, insatiability, unsteadfastness, fickleness, distractedness, ambitiousness, acquisition of friends, family pride, aversion to unpleasant objects and over-attachment to pleasant objects, unpleasant speech, gluttony—these are the characteristics of rajas. By these he is filled, by these he is influenced. Therefore, the elemental soul attains manifold forms, yes indeed, it attains manifold forms.”’ (3.5)

THIS MONTH

RELIGION AND SPIRITUAL LIFE require various kinds of disciplines to be practised by the adherents. Many of these disciplines require meditation on the transitory nature of this universe. The body is part of the universe and is transitory. However, most obstacles to spiritual life arise from this body. How to understand the body and what attitude should be cultivated towards it is discussed in **Denouncing the Body**.

Sri Ramakrishna's message continues to spread far and wide and consequently his annual birthday celebrations are observed in various places. It is interesting and inspiring to note how these celebrations were observed in grandeur more than a century ago. Swami Tathagatananda, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society, New York gives an historical account of **Sri Ramakrishna's Annual Birthday Celebrations at the New York Vedanta Society 1899–1905**.

On 6 June 2012, a meeting was held on Wall Street in New York City to discuss 'Re-Envisioning Prosperity'. Swami Atmarupananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, was one of three religious leaders asked to open the meeting with a short talk, which has been adapted into the article **A Talk Given on Wall Street**.

The different states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, and deep sleep—have always intrigued humankind. Alan Jacobs, President, Ramana Maharshi Foundation, United Kingdom, revisits some age-old questions in **Is Life A Dream?**

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and

Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. The first instalment of the collection of such questions and his answers to them is given in **Vedanta Answers**.

The unreality of the dreaming and waking states is shown in the fourth instalment of the edited transcript of a series of lectures on **Mandukya Upanishad** given by Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

The importance of truthfulness is explained through an incident from the life of Sri Ramakrishna in the fourth instalment of Swami Omkareshwarananda's recounting of **Swami Premananda's Teachings**. This has been translated from the Bengali book *Premananda*.

Many similarities of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and those of the scriptures are shown in the final instalment of **Sri Ramakrishna: Scriptures Embodied** by Swami Kritarthananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math.

The first instalment of **The Midnight Vedantic Roar** emphasises the importance of our thoughts while dying. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Harriet Brown, Associate Professor of magazine journalism at the S I Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University writes about our obsession with the body in **Body of Truth**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Denouncing the Body

THE HUMAN BODY is an interesting space. It is where a person resides. It is cherished, decorated, cared for, and adored. It is also the cause of endless suffering and the reason for hard toil. The small area of the body surface consumed by the stomach also consumes the maximum labour and attention of a person. One adorns many hats to satisfy this stomach. And this stomach is bound by the pulls of the tongue. What may be pleasing to the tongue may cause misery to the stomach and what may be pleasing to the stomach may not interest the tongue.

The human body is also a centre of networking. It is from and to this body that countless interactions between humans and other living beings, and also between humans and objects, take place. This human body is the field of numerous and diverse range of emotions, feelings, realisations, sensibilities, knowledge, and many other experiences. It is the centre of attention of the entire humanity. It is for the body that everybody produces and strives. Even while not active, even while asleep, this human body is consuming vast resources created out of human endeavour. This wonderful piece of machinery has an ignition spark called life, the root of which remains unexplained by science to this day. Life has been explained, not its cause.

The amazing handiwork of nature called the human body suffers a pronoun displacement on its demise. When a person dies, she or he becomes 'it'. The body, cherished till then, becomes an object of abhorrence, a piece of horror and any possibility of it getting active again sends shivers down the spines of all. A zombie is not

something people look forward to meeting with!

All faith-traditions are unanimous on the impermanence of the human body. There is no other way, since this impermanence is an em-

The amazing handiwork of nature called the human body suffers a pronoun displacement on its demise. When a person dies, she or he becomes 'it'.

pirical fact. However, there are diverse ways of looking at the body vis-a-vis the spiritual or religious life. Many traditions denounce the body by insulting it in their texts. In the Indian tradition, this practice is called *deha-ninda*. They emphasise the inherent filth that the body carries within and ask the spiritual aspirant to be indifferent to its pulls. Some faith-traditions decry the body, while not forgetting to add that it is through the body alone that one can attain the highest realisation. Some faith-systems consider the human body to be the temple of God and advocate decorating it. In fact, the standpoints of various faith-traditions on the position of the human body in spiritual life are so diverse that one is at a loss as to how to deal with it.

The human body is indeed filthy. There is no denying that. Holding on to its shaky foundations is the hallmark of a faulty world view. And that is the main reason why we should denounce the body. Because our body is the most palpable experience we have of holding on to a changing illusory phenomenon, mistaking it to be our only reality. How to understand the

non-reality of what we perceive to be the reality? It has to be achieved through a process carried out with the aid of the body. And here is the conundrum. We have to denounce the body for what it apparently is, to get the realisation of what is truly behind it. The body is a part of a misreading of the divine principle. We wrongly see the divine principle as this universe. And the human body is part of this universe. We have to do spiritual practices through the body to realise that this apparent universe is actually an absolute divine principle.

There are two phenomena related to the human body that elude reason or science. First is life. How and when does life leave a body? All the matter necessary for the living of a body are present in the human body even when life goes out. What exactly stops it? To date, no satisfactory answer has been found by science. It could be explained as the faulty functioning of an organ but why it happens has not been explained. The second thing that eludes science is the strange phenomenon of a person identifying with a particular body. The human brain has a peculiar tendency to get associated with external objects and even bodies belonging to other people. Sometimes such an attachment takes the shape of a mania requiring urgent treatment. This emphasises the need to understand the exact dynamics of a person's association with a human body.

When a person's limb is chopped off accidentally by high-speed machinery, the brain does not get enough time to process the cutting off of the limb and maintains the nerve centres of the limb even when they are not there! This leads to the person who has lost an arm still feeling the movement of the fingers. This phenomenon is called 'phantom limbs'. It leads to the question: what makes a person identify with the body. Various neuroscientists have conducted numerous

experiments and have concluded that the notion of the human body being present in a particular locus is an illusion. That is a great finding!

Keeping these findings of neuroscience in mind, we have to stop overrating the human body. Overemphasising the importance of the body is at the root of most suffering. At the same time, one should not neglect the body. It is to be treated as one of those many instruments we use at work. It has to be kept in a fine working condition, properly maintained, and all ailments should be immediately treated. However, we should remember that the instrument is not the end; work is. And for a spiritual aspirant, realising one's true nature, the divine principle, is the work at hand. It is in this respect that we should treat the human body as a temple. In a temple, the focus should be on the deity and not on the architecture or external decorations. Similarly, in the temple of God, the human body, the focus should be on God, not on the flesh and blood.

We need to denounce the body as a construct of the realm of ignorance. However, we need to acknowledge it as long as we dabble in this realm. It is the microcosmic representation of the universe. It is the subjective element of the objective universe. It is also the constant reminder of our faulty world view. It acts as a pointer to our wrong perception or non-perception of the divine reality. It is the ropeway to cross the chasm of this ignorant understanding and reach the supreme height of self-realisation. Seeing the body as inconsequential helps in considerably reducing the influence of bodily ailments. Also, a studied indifference to the body helps one maintain poise. A calm interior is much needed in the present-day world. The least we can do to achieve this is to abstain from bodily indulgences and discourses and concentrate on realising the ultimate truth.



Sri Ramakrishna's Annual Birthday Celebrations at the New York Vedanta Society 1899–1905

Swami Tathagatananda

Reminiscences of Sister Devamata

DURING ONE OF THE EARLY anniversary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna at the New York Vedanta Society, Sister Devamata, noted for her spiritual perception, wrote:

In the early spring I returned to New York and soon after became a member of the Vedanta Society, being put in charge of the Publishing Department. At that time books came out in rapid succession; my hours were very full and I was in frequent consultation with the head of the work. One late afternoon he [Swami Abhedananda] called me to his private study to talk over a new publication. As I entered the room, my eyes fell upon a photograph hanging over the mantel. I stood still, transfixed. It was the figure I had seen in Boston. I walked quickly across to the fireplace and asked almost abruptly, 'Of whom is this a picture?' The head of the work replied quietly: 'It is my Master, Sri Ramakrishna.'

A year passed. The anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday came. It was observed very austere at the New York Society. Of the fifty or sixty members who attended the celebration, scarcely one tasted food or drank water from before sunset on the previous evening until after sunset on the evening of the birthday. This was done, not to mortify the flesh, but to give greater freedom to the spirit. All day we sat on the floor of the class room without mat



Sister Devamata (1867–1942)

or cushion, meditating, praying, or listening to the reading of sacred books. There were brief recesses, but a hush of holy silence was upon every heart and there was little conversation—that little being in low undertones.

The atmosphere was charged with fervour. The last hour of prayer had come. We had been told that whatever we asked for in this culminating moment of the day would be granted. I could think of nothing for which to ask. No desire

entered my thought, or rather only one—to see Sri Ramakrishna once again. The stillness in the room was breathless. Something impelled me to open my eyes and there on the platform amid the masses of flowers, which had been brought in as offering, stood the living Presence.¹

Sister Devamata was extremely reluctant to reveal her mystical experiences, but she changed her mind and put them into writing for the sake of posterity. She was an American nun who lived in India from 1908 to 1910 and received intimate spiritual guidance from Swami Ramakrishnananda, the founder-president of the Ramakrishna Math in Madras. She wrote two books, *Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples* and *Days in an Indian Monastery*, chronicling the early days in South India of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement, and contributed many articles to *The Vedanta Kesari*.

A New York Correspondent's Report of the Birthday Service of 1902

On 13 March 1902, *Prabuddha Bharata's* New York correspondent wrote of the annual celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday:

The annual celebration of our Master Sri Ramakrishna promises to accomplish a double mission, in that it must not only deepen and expand the spiritual life of every one who takes part in it, but even more must with every year level and break down all barriers between the East and the West. The very fact that at the same moment in the four quarters of the globe on that feast day his followers are kneeling at his shrine, sending out thoughts of grateful worship towards him, and of affectionate good will towards one another, is enough to knit and strengthen tenfold with each recurring anniversary the bonds of fellowship which have been established in recent years through the work of Vedanta. It is especially meet, therefore, that at this sacred season greetings should go from us to you, and that you should learn something of

the way in which we, the most distant of all the disciples, observed the festival.

Since it was not possible for us to hold a continuous service throughout the twenty-four hours, as is customary with you, we began our celebration on Tuesday evening with a lecture by Swami Abhedananda on the life of the Master. Although it was intended to be merely a simple, informal recital of the chief events of that holy life as the Swami had known them, either through the Master's words or through his daily contact with him, the strong emotion which stirred him as he told of them once again, infused such fire and vividness into the narrative that more than once the audience were moved to tears; and the impression left was so profound that all came with hearts still better prepared for the more solemn portion of the celebration on Wednesday morning.

Although there was less effort made to gather in a large number than to bring together those who having the habit of meditation might really profit by the service, when the doors of the meditation room were thrown open at eleven o'clock, the Swami found the library crowded with earnest worshippers, who had brought with them not only lavish offerings of fruits and flowers but in many instances, also generous contributions to Ramakrishna's work in India. An altar had been erected on the platform under the star, where the Swami's chair usually stands, and on this was placed the picture of the Master, wreathed in flowers while all about were massed baskets of fruit, bunches of cut flowers or pots of blooming plants. When the incense had been lighted, the Swami took his place on a tiger skin to the left of the altar, those who preferred to do so, sat on the floor around him, while the majority occupied the chairs behind. The service lasted for an hour and a half and consisted of meditation, chanting, and occasional inspiring words from the Swami, in which loving reference was also made to Sarada Devi, the devoted wife of Ramakrishna.


At the close of the final meditation the fruit was passed, and all those who did not care, like the Swami, to prolong their fast until evening, partook of it. The Swami then gave a flower to each one present and with this the celebration ended.²

Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday Service of 1905

On 8 March 1905—despite heavy storm conditions and a transportation strike—the service and meditations for Sri Ramakrishna attracted an unusually large attendance. The service began at 11 a.m. with a series of meditations by Swami Abhedananda. After an intermission at 12.30 p.m., Swami Abhedananda chanted some of the Holy Master's favourite hymns. At 3.30 p.m. Swami Nirmalananda held a meditation, followed by a moving talk on the childhood and hamlet life of Sri Ramakrishna, another meditation, and an hour-long silence in prayer. The evening service at 7.30 p.m. included devotional exercises and readings from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. The offerings were more generous than in any of the previous years. And the *Bulletin* of the Society reported: 'It is customary at the time of the birthday celebration of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna to send an offering to the Math at Belur for the relief of the poor of India. This year through the generosity of different students and friends, the offering amounted to \$71.50. \$10.00 were also sent to

the Poor Men's Relief Association, and \$30.00 to the Vivekananda Memorial Fund.'

Lengthier Services of Deep Devotion

It is interesting to know that in those days, even lengthy services were accepted by the devotees. Swami Trigunatitananda held services continuously for eighteen hours on the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna and Jesus Christ. As Marie Louise Burke writes: 'Even [after the death of Swami Trigunatitananda on 10 January 1915] on Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, February 21, 1915, the students conducted a fifteen-hour service. Mr. Petersen gave the three lectures, and in between there was reading and singing. "Quite a number stayed all through the long service", the Monastery Notes read, "and such was the atmosphere of spirituality and devotion awakened by the tangible presence of that *great* soul, our great teacher, that all remarked how quickly the day passed and all felt greatly profited spiritually by the grace of God and the Swami Trigunatita.'"³ 

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*The Altar at the
Vedanta Society of
New York*

A Talk Given on Wall Street

Swami Atmarupananda

[On 6 June 2012, a meeting was held on Wall Street in New York City to discuss 'Re-Envisioning Prosperity'. Almost 70 people were invited, including financiers, investors, economists, intellectuals, representatives from the activist movement known as *Occupy Wall Street*, and a select group of religious leaders from different faiths known as the *Contemplative Alliance*. Swami Atmarupananda was one of three religious leaders asked to open the meeting with a short talk to set a tone for the ensuing day-long discussion. Below is the substance of what he said, adapted for suitability as an article—*Editor*.]

I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY ASKING, what am I doing here, addressing such a distinguished gathering of economic thinkers and finance actors? [*Laughter*] I have never attended a formal class on economics or finance; I have no money to invest, and therefore am not involved as an actor in the financial world. What, indeed, can I contribute?

Worse yet, I'm a contemplative, dedicated to leading a spiritual life, and thus, according to common opinion, I'm hopelessly impractical. No, had I any sense, I should have refused when Dena Merriam asked me to open today's discussion.

But I didn't say no. Let me explain why.

First of all, it isn't true that contemplatives are by nature impractical. An important member of the business community here in New York City in the late 1800s and early 1900s was a man named Mr Francis Leggett, who was a major innovator in the wholesale grocery business. He was a wealthy man of the time, and a friend of a famous Hindu monk from India named Swami

Vivekananda. Mr Leggett was once asked why a hard-nosed businessman like himself should be friends with an oriental mystic, and he replied, 'Because I have never met anyone with more common sense'.

Nor is it true that a contemplative has no connection to the interests of economists and financiers. Where does our economic system come from? Our financial system? Wall Street? They aren't in the air, natural products of the earth or water. They come from human beings, from *inside* human beings, from the inside out. All human institutions, human civilisation, culture, sciences, arts, come from inside the human mind and heart, manifesting outside. And it is the human mind and heart that is the special field of research for the contemplative; not the surface, but the deep mind, the deep heart, the very roots of human existence.

And further, the true contemplative is in search of experiential reality, not theories or concepts. A prominent modern belief—and it's nothing more than a belief—is that reality is what you make of it: there's no such thing as reality itself. If that's true, then we are all prisoners of our own concepts and illusions. The contemplative's experience, however, is that there is reality; there is truth beyond her or his concepts and projections.

So the contemplative seeks deep in the human heart and mind, the same place from which all human activities proceed, all drives, all needs, all aspirations. But the contemplative seeks to go deeper, to an experiential reality



which is prior to needs and drives and aspirations and activities.

What is found there? Certain truths, a couple of which I want to share with you before I turn the conference over to those who know much more than I about the actual workings of the economy.

First, one finds at a deep level of our being a remarkable freedom. A freedom that gives us a sense of inner inviolability, of timelessness, adamant in quality, unaffected by the waves of action and reaction in the world.

One also discovers a sense of connection, connection to everyone and everything—an apparent contradiction, where we go inward to find connection with the outer; but it is a fact replicated in the experience of countless inner travellers over thousands of years around the world.

And then there is the apparent contradiction between freedom and connection. Freedom we think of as ‘freedom from’—freedom from people telling me what to do, freedom from things I don’t like, freedom from duty and expectations, freedom from all botheration—and most people and most circumstances we experience as botheration. Yet ‘connection’ means connection to others, to the world, to everything that seems to deprive us of freedom. But the contemplative begins to experience both of these—freedom and connection—at a deep level, where they are joined, where they are expressions of the same thing, which can best be described as love.

Let me say here that none of what I have said is beyond the reach of us here: I’m not speaking of lofty and rare states of consciousness like enlightenment, but of truths that any

of us can begin to experience if we wish, and if we train ourselves.

But what does all this have to do with us gathered here today? A great deal, actually.

A deep inner freedom translates at the level of ordinary human activity to the freedom to choose the motivations of my actions, and to choose my reactions to circumstances. That means I need not be a slave to old patterns of behaviour, a slave to habitual reactions to situations. And so this deep sense of freedom paradoxically makes me more responsible for my actions. I *can* begin to take responsibility for my actions, and therefore I begin to make the effort, out of a sense of freedom.

And a deep sense of connection to everything makes me feel a sense of loving responsibility toward others. ‘Responsibility’ is not the right word, being heavy, connoting something forced, and guilt-based. Simply love for others, the desire for the best for others. That, combined with the freedom that allows me to take responsibility for my actions, radically changes my relationship to the world in a wonderful, positive way—difficult at times, but eventually liberating, joyful.

How is this related to economics and finance? Intimately.

You, whether you are thinkers or actors, have a tremendous responsibility. Tremendous, because as Peter Parker tells his Uncle Ben in *Spiderman*, ‘With great power comes great responsibility’. And you here have great power. Decisions you make help people or hurt them, even devastate them, as happened in 2008, largely through misguided and greedy actors in the real estate and financial sectors. The welfare of millions—vulnerable people, the elderly, the sick, the poor, those who have no alternative but to trust the system—is dependent upon you.

Responsibility to others. The US Supreme Court may say that a corporation’s responsibility is simply to enhance value for the stockholders, but that is much worse than nonsense, it is poison. Because it is a decision of the Supreme Court, it may stand in a court of law, but it doesn’t reflect the way life actually works. Whether we want it so or not, we are responsible to others: it’s the way the universe is built, because all this infinite diversity we see out here is founded on a deep inner connection, I would even say a deep inner unity, but at least connection, a connectedness that can be demonstrated scientifically, psychologically, morally, and spiritually. It isn’t a matter of belief, and that’s why simply ignoring it doesn’t work: what you do to others comes back to you. Not for some New Age touchy-feely reason, but because the outer world is intimately connected to you in experiential fact.

So I close by saying that many of you, perhaps all of you, are here today because you are sensitive to the welfare of others. Otherwise you wouldn’t waste time on a meeting like this. But the present financial system, and the even larger economic system, will last only if this understanding, this sensitivity becomes widespread within it. Otherwise the system is on its way out, not today, but in ten years, maybe, or fifty years, certainly less than a hundred years, because the inner contradictions on which it is based are no longer bridgeable. And if the system breaks irreparably because people didn’t learn to care for others, then the breaking will be devastating to countless people, causing untold suffering. The only long term hope is learning to adjust the financial system to the way the universe is actually built, the way it actually works. This is no time for denial, and there is no time to delay.

Thank you.



Is Life A Dream?

Alan Jacobs

He hath awaken'd from the dream of life;
'Tis we who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.

SO WROTE PERCY B SHELLEY in his epic poem *Adonais*, when praising the deceased John Keats. Shelley may have hit the proverbial nail right on the head, but we must admit that 'Life As A Dream' is a most perplexing question that has exercised the minds of great philosophers, both secular and religious, for centuries, and needs a thorough examination to convince our ordinary ego, body, and mind of its essential truth. Then it will eventually weaken our identification with the so called 'world and it's drama' it perceives on the screen of consciousness awareness.

The Cinema Screen

The great Swami Vivekananda was insistent on this point when in no uncertain terms he said: 'From dreams awake, from bonds be free; Be not afraid. This mystery; My shadow, cannot frighten me, Know once for all that I am He.'¹ Sri Ramakrishna also made a similar succinct point when he said: 'The bhaktas accept all the states of consciousness. They take the waking state to be real also. They don't think the world to be illusory, like a dream.'²

Sri Ramana Maharishi went even further when he told Paul Brunton: 'You are the screen, the Self has created the ego: the ego has its thoughts which are displayed to the world like

cinema pictures. These thoughts are the world. But in Reality there is nothing but Self. These are all projections of the ego.'³

To add to these great sages, Acharya Shankara, the great consolidator of Advaita Vedanta, followed by all of the aforementioned, writes: 'He who, in his direct experience of the Immaculate-Supreme-Bliss-Eternal, has come to the firm understanding that the entire universe is but an extensive play of pure Consciousness, all projected by his "ignorance", expressed in the three moods of his mind, while he himself is but that Brahman.'⁴

These findings of Advaita Vedanta are contrasted by sages most strongly with the average so-called 'common-sense view' that the world is real, it is all we have, and one must just make the best of it before we die. This they regard as the standpoint of ignorance. Life is rather a dream that the jiva has to wake up from, sooner or later.

Sri Ramana Maharishi explains the mechanism of the world dream creation poetically as follows, in the sixth verse of his eighth hymn to Arunachala:

Thou art Thyself the one being,
ever aware as the Self-luminous Heart!
In Thee there is a mysterious power (*Shakti*)
which without Thee is nothing.
From it proceeds the phantom of the mind
emitting its latent subtle dark mists,
which illumined by Thy light (of consciousness)
reflected on them,
appear within as thoughts whirling
in the vortices of *prarabdha*,

later developing into the psychic worlds and projected outwardly as the material world transformed into concrete objects which are magnified by the outgoing senses and move about like pictures in a cinema show.⁵

He asserted that if Shankara had known about the cinematograph he would have also used this analogy. Briefly, the film is the preordained karma that Ishvara has prepared for the jiva's spiritual development from selected appropriate latent tendencies formed in this and previous lives—and this film, so to speak, is in the can. The light of the projector is the reflected light of the Self. The screen is our pure awareness consciousness.

Advaita Bodha Dipika

One must now look at that important Advaitic classic, the *Advaita Bodha Dipika* by Sri Karapatra Swami, where this illusion is examined thoroughly in the first chapter. I summarise its findings as follows, largely based and inspired by this chapter of this marvellous treatise, entitled 'On Superimposition'.

All is absolute, pure, infinite consciousness, non-dual, supreme intelligence, the self-existent Self or Brahman. Maya or illusion, the powers of veiling and projection are inherent powers in Brahman. These powers manifest an apparent but unreal universe. It is unreal because it was *not* before manifestation and will *not be* after dissolution. Therefore it is likened to a dream in the supreme intelligence or mind of Brahman. Thus the apparent universe is but an appearance based on Brahman. It does not exist apart from Brahman.

One must remember that in Advaita Vedanta, the term 'real' is applied to the immutable or unchanging. The apparent world is constantly changing, in a state of flux, becoming and

decaying, so it cannot be termed 'real' in this sense, whereas Brahman is immutable, unchanging, and eternal.

The ignorant 'jiva' or individual soul is reborn and dies continuously through many lifetimes, until self-realisation. It carries forward from each life the seeds of many latent tendencies from previous lives, although its true nature is the absolute pure consciousness of Atman-Brahman. But because of the implicit maya, projection and veiling, it identifies with its insentient body and creates a universe from its latent tendencies through the mind, organ of cognition, the brain, and sensory adjuncts. The mind is a wondrous power in the Self. The world it sees, composed of latent tendencies and thoughts is therefore of the nature of a dream, even a hallucination, and may be termed 'unreal'.

The latent tendencies inherent in each jiva at the time of each life are selected by Ishvara, an adjunct of Brahman, for its spiritual development. So, all is benign, essentially based on love. This is stated by Ramana Maharishi in answer to a question by Paul Brunton, which I quote towards the end of this article.

The mind-body complex, personal individuality, other sentient beings, and the universe of multiplicity, are therefore, a superimposition on the Self which is now living from reflected Consciousness, mirrored by egotism and the latent tendencies.

Through divine grace, the jiva receives Advaitic teachings from a knower, and when fit, through assimilation of this knowledge and mental purification through right intellectual discernment, spiritual practice, and devotion, she or he is shown the way of awakening from the dream of suffering and transient joy. The means are through self-enquiry into the source of the ego, the Self, and the illusory nature of the universe.

At the same time one lives as if life was real, knowing it to be unreal, and accepting all that happens as ultimately for the best.

When there is an awakening from the dream of life, the transmigration of the jiva is over. The immortal Self of infinite consciousness is realised directly and one lives in that natural state, *sahaja*, until the mind-body aggregate falls off in death, and one is absorbed into Brahman or infinite consciousness, no longer a separate individual identified with its body and mind. All is the Self, and the world is seen to be real because its substratum is now known to be Brahman.

The Western Perspective

Now let us look at Western Philosophy for answers to this question. George Berkeley aka Bishop Berkeley (1685–1753) was a talented metaphysician famous for defending idealism, that is, the view that the so-called reality consists exclusively of minds and their ideas.

He was the first to develop the concept now called subjective idealism. He formulated this insight based on the observation that whatever the subject apprehends is just the relationship between the subject's own mental states and that which is perceived. This was developed by Immanuel Kant (1724–1824) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) to form the influential school of thought called Western Idealism. Many other Western philosophers have also developed this argument. This broadly coincides with the Advaitic formulation that the seer creates the seen, just as in a dream. Wittgenstein went as far as to state that solipsism or subjective idealism is at the core of metaphysics. It is fair to say that no Western philosopher has ever proved that life is not a dream; they prefer to regard it as a formidable argument and go no further to defeat it. The waking dream does contain the law of cause and effect as does the sleeping dream, but this is

not a proof of reality which is immutable. The Western idealists point out that the concepts of space, time, and causality are inherent, a priori, in the organ of cognition or the brain, and on the screen of consciousness awareness or the world stage, actions and pictures are seen.

Quantum physics now doubts the reality of the world as it is in a constant state of flux, and is not what we see, but composed of electrons, atoms, particles, and so on. Our sensory apparatus of touch makes it all appear to be solid. The famous quantum physicist, Erwin Schrödinger put it succinctly when he wrote:

The scientist only imposes two things, namely truth and sincerity, imposes them upon himself and upon other scientists. ... The world is given to me only once, not one existing and one perceived. Subject and object are only one. The barrier between them cannot be said to have broken down as a result of recent experience in the physical sciences, for this barrier does not exist.⁶

The famous scientist Sir Arthur Eddington wrote:

The stuff of the world is mind-stuff. ... The mind-stuff of the world is, of course, something more general than our individual conscious minds ... The mind-stuff is not spread in space and time; these are part of the cyclic scheme ultimately derived out of it. ... It is necessary to keep reminding ourselves that all knowledge of our environment from which the world of physics is constructed, has entered in the form of messages transmitted along the nerves to the seat of consciousness. ... Consciousness is not sharply defined, but fades into subconsciousness; and beyond that we must postulate something indefinite but yet continuous with our mental nature. ... It is difficult for the matter-of-fact physicist to accept the view that the substratum of everything is of mental character. But no one can deny that mind is the first and most direct thing in our experience, and all else is remote inference.⁷

All this conforms very broadly with the Advaitic view that the seen world is unreal and may be compared to a dream. It is fair to say that what we perceive as the so-called 'real' is entirely and highly conditioned by our five senses. Every creature creates its own universe through its sensory apparatus. A dog has its own universe as does a mosquito, and so does the human being.

There is an objection often made to this world view, that others affirm the world to be real. But these 'others' are merely dream figures in our own dream and have no more validity as being real as the rest in our dreams.


Perhaps, the crowning statement on this point was made by Ramana Maharishi when in reply to Paul Brunton, who asked what karma was, he replied: 'God manipulates the fruits of karma. He does not add or take away from it. The subconscious of man is a warehouse of good and bad karma. Isvara chooses from this warehouse what He sees will best suit the spiritual evolution at the time of each man whether pleasant or painful. Thus there is nothing arbitrary.'⁸

This implies that each jiva's world dream has been especially chosen by God for its spiritual development. We must also remember that there is no real death and every soul moves around in the cycle of transmigration of souls until self-realisation when the whole life dream collapses.

This is forcibly summed up in the famed Advaita Vedanta classic *Tripura Rasa* echoing Acharya Shankara when it states: 'Therefore recognise the fact that the world is simply an image on the mirror of consciousness and cultivate the contemplation of "I Am", abide as pure being, and thus give up this delusion of the reality of the world.'⁹

As a poet I have tried to summarise this discussion poetically. Perhaps poetry can express a subtle truth better than prose?

Mother Maya's Magic Potion Picture Show

Everything we find and feel and see,
Is but an illusory jamboree,
Mere fleeting pictures on awareness's screen,
Produced by Mother Maya as a scene
Which can best be likened
to night time dreams,
What feels to be real is not what it seems.
Ma Maya's a child of Brahman the Great,
She with Ishvara have a preordained fate,
To produce a film for each jiva born,
From repressed tendencies fair and forlorn.
The aim of this phantasmagoria,
Is blessed salvation for each jiva.
That's the death of ignorance's story,
They restore each soul to her rightful glory,
So she shall grow in spiritual strength,
And waken from this sad worldly wrench.
Brahman's the substratum and I am 'That',
Chit ananda, pure conscious existence Sat. 

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Vedanta Answers

Swami Smaranananda

[Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. This is a collection of such questions and his answers to them—*Editor*.]

QUESTION: In today's society, nothing is black and white. One lie may save a lot of trouble for someone. Even for our well-wishers, we have to bend our principles. What to do in such dilemmas?

Answer: This is a difficult problem, but it has no categorical answer. One has to use one's discretion in dealing with such situations, avoiding serious compromise. After doing what you have to do, pray for pardon to the Lord.

Question: When I came here [to a residential college], I felt very lonely, missing my home, friends, and all. Now, I am at least not unhappy. Is the power of detachment growing within me?

Answer: This has nothing to do with detachment. A person wants familiar situations; when that is not available, one feels miserable, and when it is available one is happy.

Question: Is it possible that just by thinking to be desireless, I can be desireless?

Answer: No. What in Sanskrit are called *viveka* and *vichara*, are necessary to clearly understand the phenomenal nature of the world and try to 'download' desires from your mind.

Question: Sometimes our activity might be right according to our perspective but sometimes the other person looks at it from a different

perspective and a different state of mind. So what is the correct parameter to judge an action?

Answer: Ask yourself whether what you are doing is selfish or selfless. This will be the criterion to judge whether what you are doing is spiritually and morally right or wrong.

Question: What is the aim of peace and harmony all over the world? If there is peace and harmony all over the world what would happen?

Answer: Obviously peace and harmony are most sought after, but are always eluding mankind. If peace and harmony are there the human being can evolve spiritually, which is the ultimate goal of all humanity.

Question: In the lives of most great people who have attained an evolved state, we see that they had the constant guidance of a guru. How can we find the right kind of guru in the present-day?

Answer: If you are serious about it, you will find a guru at the right time. The guru shows you the path, but you have to do the walking yourself.

Question: Could you please explain one concept of change in identification with the body and the mind to the other side that is full of joy?

Answer: The question is not clear. You exist in the mind both ways.

Question: We all get involved in some kind of activities at some time. These activities depend on our thoughts and biases. How do we know what activities should we be involved in? How can one know what one doesn't know already, like how can one know about the existence of good literature like the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, if one does not know that already?

Answer: 'Seek and you shall find', says Jesus. It depends on how serious your search is.

Question: I procrastinate. What are the remedies for the same? Yoga? Change in food?

Answer: The remedy for procrastination is neither yoga, nor food. Make a firm resolve that you will not procrastinate, and that will bring results.

Question: Why do I become lazy and easy-going on Sundays? Is it because I am not doing work in the right spirit during the other days of the week? Who will do better work: The one driven by desires, attachments, or the immediate goals, or the one with higher long-term goals?

Answer: A little relaxation is not laziness. Actually, you should work better after a day's relaxation. Work for what? One engaged in *nishkama karma*, selfless action, can certainly do better work.

Question: Why should one offer the fruits of meditation to God? Is it to avoid attachment to or pride of meditation?

Answer: If you dedicate all your actions and the fruits of actions to God, your responsibility ends; the Lord takes them up. That is karma yoga. This way you can conquer your ego.

Question: Why is it that majority of the people cannot perform skilful action? What is the basic fault with us?

Answer: You have taken for granted that the majority of people cannot perform skilful action. That is not correct. Everyone may be skilful in one action or the other. If one is able to work on those lines there will be no aversion. The right vocational guidance is needed.

Question: Are *karma*, action; *vikarma*, prohibited action; and *akarma*, inaction, related to *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*?

Answer: Yes. You can relate these *karmas* to *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*.

Question: Are all of us gods or is there someone who is controlling all of us? If so, who is that person?

Answer: First of all, tell clearly what you mean by the word 'God'? Sri Hanuman's words in this regard can be the answer: '*Deha-buddhya tu daso'ham, jiva-buddhya tvadamshakam; atma-buddhya tvamevaham iti me nishchita matih*'; while with body-consciousness, I am your servant. While with the consciousness of an individual soul, I am your part. While with the knowledge of the Atman, I am convinced that I am indeed the same as you.' Answer to this question should be on the above lines.

Question: Sometimes, through rational thinking, *viveka*, a person's thoughts and mind are influenced by other people's opinions resulting in confusion. Therefore, would it be better to train the heart through spiritual reading, discussion, or meditation and then make choices using the heart, but not emotions, in parallel with rational thinking?

Answer: This is not a question! What do you mean by the heart? Try to look at your mind.

Question: How to improve willpower and the power of discernment?

Answer: Discernment or *viveka* can help you strengthen your willpower. You should understand first where to apply your willpower. Mahatma Gandhi is an example of how to strengthen one's willpower.

Question: What is the best way to practise meditation? Books, lectures, or self-practice? Do we need any kind of skill for meditation? Or will it come through experience or practice?

Answer: Books or lectures can give you only direction. Practice or *abhyasa* is the best way to improve or practise meditation.

Question: How to deal with someone who is defaming you or spreading false allegations against you? How to stop daydreaming?

Answer: Try to expose the person. Or else, *upeksha*, indifference is the way. Out of dreams, sometimes great ideas spring up.

Question: Which is better: to have lesser choices in life or to have more choices? And can a prior 'will' lead to lesser choices in the future?

Answer: Your question is not clear. Choice of what?

Question: How do I study well; because though I am doing very hard work my result is not good?

Answer: Too much hard work may make your mind tired and dull. Make a time-table yourself and follow it. Don't read till midnight.

Question: How do you differentiate between feeling detached and feeling unemotional? How can we get the right balance between emotion and detachment?

Answer: Same answer: *viveka* and *vichara*. Mentally examine your thoughts.

Question: Why can't we look up to our parents and teachers as gods?

Answer: Well, parents and teachers are also human beings: a mixture of good and bad. In spite of that you should consider them as gods as told in Vedic dicta like '*matridevo bhava*; consider your mother as god'.

Question: You told about *ahimsa*, non-violence; so can a non-vegetarian practise meditation?

Answer: Why not? Everyone can practise meditation. It has nothing to do with eating. Here, follow the advice of the Bhagavadgita: 'Yoga is not for one who eats too much, nor for one who does not eat at all.'¹

Question: Last week we spoke about *viveka*, discernment and *vairagya*, dispassion. For the past one week, I have been watching myself, and there is no *vairagya* to follow *viveka*. What should I do?

Answer: Well, it means you still have desires to be conquered. So, don't give up: one week is nothing; you may need even a full year.

Question: How does depression affect the memory of the mind? Is it true that memory decreases when depression increases? Will meditation help to overcome depression?

Answer: Depression acts in various ways. Memory also can be affected. Meditation is rather difficult if there is depression. So you should discern, find out the causes of depression and get rid of it. Consult a psychologist if possible, not a psychiatric.

Question: How can one prevent sleeping while meditating?

Answer: You sleep while meditating because you are mentally and physically tired. So stop meditation for some time and start again when you are fully awake.

Question: How to avoid bad dreams? Will meditation help?

Answer: Meditation may help, provided your meditation is effective. To prevent bad dreams you should try to think pure and healthy thoughts.

Question: What should we do with the random thoughts and images that come during meditation, collected through various sense-organs?

Answer: Random thoughts at the time of meditation should be replaced by good thoughts.

Question: If I am not able to concentrate on any form for long time then what should I do?

Answer: Slowly increase the quantum of meditation. Slow and steady wins the race. Don't try too much at a time.

Question: What is the difference between *dharana* and *pratyahara*?

Answer: See Swamiji's commentary on *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*, 2.54 for the definition of *pratyahara* and his commentary on *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*, 3.1 for the definition of *dharana*. From these, we understand that *pratyahara* means the drawing of the organs within and being lodged in the mind stuff. And, drawing the mind towards a single object is *dharana*.

Question: We are not the body but soul. During meditation, the question crops up in the mind: where am I in the body?

Answer: The soul is not limited by space. So where it is during meditation is not relevant. But the scriptures advise us to meditate in the heart, where the Atman is experienced more.

Question: There are certain office-going people, who come home late in the night and leave very early in the morning. How do such people manage to meditate?

Answer: Are you asking how they—the office-going people—manage to meditate? Better ask them about it! Generally speaking, if one can allot fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen minutes in the evening or night for meditation, it will do.

Question: Is initiation necessary for succeeding in meditation?

Answer: Initiation helps meditation, though it is not absolutely necessary.

Question: I am not able to concentrate in my spiritual heart. So should I concentrate on some outer images of God to improve?

Answer: You may keep the picture of your *ishtha*, chosen ideal, in front of you and practise. In course of time you may be able to draw the form of your *ishtha* in your heart.

Question: My question is about posture. I usually meditate sitting on an *asana*, meditation seat, on the ground. While meditating I realise that my back is gradually bending, and then I try to correct that. Is it alright if I meditate sitting on the ground against the wall? And is the significance of *asana* then lost, if I touch my back against the wall?

Answer: Patanjali says: '*Sthiram sukham asanam*, the posture should be firm and pleasant.' If you cannot keep your body straight then it is better to lean against a wall, rather than bending it. Gradually, you should be able to correct the posture.

Question: Is it harmful to meditate, study, or sleep, below a concrete beam in a room?

Answer: I don't understand whose bright idea this is! It seems absurd.

Question: Sexual thoughts keep coming in my mind. How should I control my sexual desires?

Answer: At your age [the questioner was young], it is but natural. Avoid things that induce sexual thoughts and try to think more pure thoughts—of God, of the welfare of others.

Question: On some days, the mind can directly think of an inner divine inside without even thinking initially of the body and the mind. Is it then advisable to do the preliminary steps? But, on many days in spite of sitting for ten or fifteen minutes, the mind cannot even start thinking of the body or of starting the process of meditation.

Answer: Your thoughts spring up in your mind. The mind can think of the divine and avoid thinking of the body. For this you will have to watch the mind—what it is thinking about, and so on.

Question: Does spiritual awakening in one's life come when one fails to find something higher in this materialistic world? In this context, what was the motive for great ancient rishis for practising spiritual practices?

Answer: Your basic idea, that one thinks of spiritual life when one fails to think of higher things in materialistic life, is totally wrong. One has not to fail in worldly life in order to think of God. This is a very negative attitude. The rishis were very positive. Their search was for knowing the truth behind this phenomenal world.

Question: Does the mind have different levels of clarity and understanding on the same subject at various instances of time, calmness of mind, and so on?

Answer: Yes, the mind is not always at the same level. These different levels can be understood through meditation.

(To be continued)

References

1. Gita, 6.16.

Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THEY ARE NOT BORN AGAIN, because *Turiya* is not a cause. For, the illusory snake which has merged in the rope on the discrimination of the snake from the rope, does not reappear as before.³¹ Once you know the rope there is no snake coming back again. 'To those who know the distinction between them ... the men of dull or mediocre intellect who still consider themselves as students of philosophy, who having renounced the world, tread on the path of virtue and who know the common features between the sounds ... and the quarters ... as described above—to them *Aum*, if meditated upon in a proper way, becomes a great help to the realisation of Brahman. The same is indicated in the *Kārikā* later on thus: 'The three inferior stages of life' (ibid.). In the third chapter, it will come. 'Soundless—It is because *Amātra*—[*matra* means sound or syllable; *amatra* is no sound, no syllable]—*Aum* cannot be expressed by any sound. [The last part.] It is relationless, it cannot be described as the substratum of three other sounds. Sound points out; by contrast, the soundless *Aum*. [Sound ends in soundlessness.] All sounds must, at some time or other, merge in soundlessness' (ibid.). Sri Ramakrishna used to say that when you strike a gong, a deep sound starts, slowly merges into the soundless.³² 'This *Amātra Aum* is identical with *Turiya Ātman*.'³³ All bliss.

In the Rig Veda there is a beautiful analysis of sound. What wonderful people they were. Sound has four dimensions. The grossest dimension is

uttered speech. The other three dimensions are seen only by the yogis. The earlier part, *para* is the first part of sound, which is absolutely indistinguishable from the infinite. *Pashyanti*, slightly more gross, *madhyama*, more gross, and the last is *vaikhari*, uttered speech. The speech, before you utter it, passes through three states. But that aspect of the speech can be seen only by the yogis, others can see only uttered speech. That is why Swami Brahmananda and Swami Turiyananda lived for months together in the same room in Vrindavan—you get a little about that in the book on Swami Saradananda—and never talked to each other but they were infinitely accorded to each other. No talking is necessary. When talking is necessary, we are at the grossest level. That is why in a civilisation where talking keeps up a human relationship, when you cease to talk, friendship breaks. Because we are at a very gross level of human communication. At a higher level not much talking is necessary. The heart knows the heart. The mind of the mother connects with the baby, not through talk but through mere feeling communication. Very subtle it is. This capacity we are losing in civilisation. That is why chattering is necessary in civilisation to keep up human relationship. Constant chattering. Husband and wife must chatter all the time. Otherwise it will be cruelty, they will say. If you are not talking, you are being cruel to me; finished. Your grossest human relationship is called *vaikhari*, but you are still on it because you don't know there is a higher one. There is a mental communication.

These first three: *para*, *pashyanti*, *madhyama*—three words. Extremely subtle. Modern sonics can understand it. Sound and uttered sound. How many low sounds are there! Very, very, low sounds are there, which your ears cannot catch. But they are sound. High sound, low sound—both are there; high pitch, low pitch.

‘*Om̐karam padasho vidyat pada matra na samshayah, om̐karam padasho jnatva na kinchidapi chintayet.* (The meaning of) *Aumkāra* should be known quarter by quarter’ (81). [A, U, M] There is no doubt that quarters are the same sounds, letters. That is, the waking self is A, the dream self is U, the sleeping self is M. The transcendent is that *amatra*, soundless Om. ‘Having grasped the (meaning of) *Aumkāra* nothing else should be thought of [in meditation]’ (ibid.). This is what meditation is. ‘*Aumkāra* should be known along with the quarters’, Shankara says (ibid.).

Yunjita pranave chetah pranavo brahma nirbhayam, pranave nityayuktasya na bhayam vidyate kvachit. The mind should be unified with (the sacred syllable) *Aum*. (For) *Aum* is Brahman, the ever-fearless. He who is always unified with *Aum* knows no fear whatever. ... *Pranavo hyaparam brahma pranavashcha parah smritah, apurvo’nantaro’bahyo’naparah pranavo’vyayah.* The sacred syllable *Aum* is verily the Lower Brahman, and it is also the Supreme Brahman. [Meaning personal god, impersonal god.] *Aum* is without beginning (cause), unique, without anything outside itself, unrelated to any effect and [therefore] changeless’ (82).

Om is both the Lower Brahman and higher Brahman. Vedanta uses the words lower Brahman, higher Brahman, *para* Brahman, *apara* Brahman. We call it personal god, impersonal god, both are the same. God is one. Personal-impersonal unity and Om is for both. ‘From the highest standpoint, sounds and quarters disappear (in the soundless *Aum*) it is verily the same as the Supreme Brahman. It is without cause

because no cause can be predicated of it. It is unique because nothing else, belonging to any other species separate from it, exists. Similarly nothing else exists outside it. It is further not related to any effect ... It is without cause and exists everywhere, both inside and outside, like salt in the water of the ocean’ (ibid.). Any part of the water of the ocean you take, it is all salt. Salt has disappeared, only ocean remains.

‘*Sarvasya pranavo hyadir-madhyamantas-tathaiva cha, evam hi pranavo jnatva vyashnute tadanantaram.* *Aum* is verily the beginning, middle, and end of all. Knowing *Aum* as such, one, without doubt, attains immediately to that (the Supreme Reality). ... *Pranavam hishvaram vidyat sarvasya hridi samsthitam, sarva-vyapinam-om̐karam matva dhiro na shochati.* Know *Aum* to be *Īśvara* [the lord], ever present in the mind of all; the man of discrimination realising *Aum* as all-pervading does not grieve’ (82–4).

The last shloka: ‘*Amatro’nantamatrashcha dvaitasyopashamah shivah, om̐karo vidito yena sa munirnetaro janah.* One who has known *Aum* which is soundless and of infinite sounds and which is ever-peaceful on account of negation of duality is the (real) sage and none other. ... *Amātra* or soundless *Aum* signifies *Turiya*. *Mātrā* means measure’ (84). *Ma* means to measure. Even the English word ‘measure’ comes from *ma*, *matra*, *minoti*. ‘That which has infinite measure or magnitude is called *Anantamātra*’ (ibid.). Brahman is not only without measure but it is infinite measure. You can treat it as infinitely small, infinitely big, that is the nature of Brahman—smaller than an atom, bigger than a universe, the Upanishad says. ‘That is to say, it is not possible to determine its extension or measure by pointing to this or that. It is ever-peaceful on account of its being the negation of all duality. He who knows *Aum*, as explained above, is the (real)

sage because he has realised the nature of the Supreme Reality. No one else, though he may be an expert in the knowledge of the Scriptures, is a sage' (84–5). Mere scholar is not a sage; one who has realised this truth is a sage.

Here ends the first chapter of Gaudapada's *Karika* with the commentary of Shankaracharya. This is what you call *Agama Prakarana*, the section dealing with the text of the Veda, *agama*. So, we depend on the text of the Veda. In the next book, without the Veda, sheer rational investigation and experience, we establish the same truth. That is the second one. 'Salutation to Brahman' (86). See V Subrahmanya Iyer's note in the first, very first, opening page of the book; before the foreword.

Note: The unique feature of *Māṇḍūkya* lies in this that while all the other Upaniṣads deal with the several phases of Vedānta, such as Religion, Theology, Scholasticism, Mysticism, Science, Metaphysics and Philosophy, *Māṇḍūkya* deals exclusively with *Philosophy*, as defined by *the most modern authorities*. The three fundamental problems of philosophy, according to this special treatise are, (1) the nature of the external (material) and the internal (mental) worlds; (2) the nature of consciousness; and (3) the meaning of causality. Each of these subjects is dealt with in a chapter. The first chapter sums up the whole at the very commencement. There is nothing more for philosophy to do. While it shows how the most advanced modern sciences and modern philosophies are approaching its conclusions, it gives to the world of our own times its central doctrine that partial data give partial truth, whereas the totality of data alone gives the perfect truth. The 'Totality' of data we have only when the three states of waking, dream and deep-sleep are coordinated for investigation. Endless will be the systems of philosophy, if based on the waking state only. Above all inasmuch as this philosophy holds that mere 'satisfaction' is no criterion of truth, ['it satisfies

me'—that is no criterion; even a falsity can satisfy] the best preparation for a study of *Vedānta Philosophy* is a training in *scientific method*, but with a determination to get at the very end: 'To stop not till the goal (of Truth) is reached.—v. s. I (Note).

In the foreword, there is something more—about how he came to this philosophy, V Subrahmanya Iyer, at the end of the nineteenth century, that time: 'Of two such renowned personages of our day one was my most revered Guru, the late Śrī Saccidānanda Śivābhinava Narasimha Bhārati Swāmi of Sringeri, who introduced me to the study of the *Kārikās*, at whose feet I had the inestimable privilege of sitting as a pupil' (ii). He was a contemporary of Vivekananda, that Shankaracharya of Shringeri.

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People treat him as a man of realisation, *jnani*, and all that.

A short account of my first lesson in Gauḍapāda may not be considered irrelevant by the reader. The very first day I paid my respects to the Swāmī more than forty years ago [means the end of the nineteenth century], I started thus: 'The follower of every religion thinks that his faith, his scripture or his interpretation of it reveals the highest truth and that they are therefore superior to other faiths, scriptures or interpretations. This notion has contributed not a little to the misfortunes of mankind in this world. The case is not far different with many of those that are called philosophers. Though they have not instigated men to cause bloodshed, as mere religionists have done and are still doing, yet they have made their followers delight rather in their own points of *difference* than in those of *agreement*. How then is a Hindu in any way better than a Mahomedan or a Christian? Or again, if truth or ultimate truth, a something common to all minds, cannot be rationally reached, is not *philosophic* enquiry a wild goose chase, as so many modern and honest thinkers have held? Lastly, as regards truth itself, everyone, even a fool, thinks that what he knows is the truth.' The Swāmī in reply said, 'What you say may be true with regard to mere religion, mysticism, theology or scholasticism which are mistaken for philosophy. It may be so with the early or intermediate stages in philosophy. But Vedānta, particularly its philosophy, is something different. It starts with the very question you ask. It sets before itself the object of finding a truth, 'Free from all dispute' and 'Not opposed to any school of thought or religion or interpretation of scriptures.' [This is from the original text. It comes within quotation marks: 'Vedānta is a subject free from all disputes.'] Its truth is independent of sect, creed, colour, race, sex, and belief. And it aims at what is 'Equally *good* for *all* beings'. [That is the aim of Vedānta.] Then, I said, that I would devote the whole of my life to the study of Vedānta, if the Swāmī would be so

gracious as to introduce me to a Vedāntin, past or present, that did not or does not claim superiority for his religion over others on the authority of his own scripture, who does not refuse to open the gates of his heaven to those that differ from him, but who seeks only such philosophic *truth* as does not lead to differences among men. Immediately the revered Guru quoted three verses from Gauḍapāda, *Kārikās* II-1, III-17 and IV-2, and explained them, the substance of which has been quoted above. 'If you want', he added, 'truth indisputable by any one and truth beneficent to *all* men, nay, to all *beings*, read and inwardly digest what Śaṅkara's teacher's teacher, Śrī Gauḍapāda says in his *Kārikās*. ...

[That is the first time he learnt from this, the fundamental question of philosophy.] After studying Gauḍapāda for a time I turned to the Upaniṣad and the *Brahma-Sūtras* as interpreted by Śaṅkara under the Sringeri Swāmī's invaluable guidance. ... Two thousand years ago Gauḍapāda anticipated what science is just beginning to guess in regard to 'causal' relation without a knowledge of which Vedānta can *never* be understood. The meaning of 'Truth' which is still a matter of dispute among many philosophers has been investigated by him more deeply than has yet been done by other thinkers. [That is all it deals with: perception.]

Much less does the West know of Gauḍapāda's method of complete eradication of 'Ego' or the personal 'self', a subject, to the supreme importance of which, Western Science—not its Philosophy or speculation which is blissfully ignorant of it—is just becoming alive. Swāmī Vivekānanda says, 'Can anything be attained with any shred of "I" left?' And Śrī Śaṅkara says, 'The root of all obstacles (in the pursuit of Truth) is the first form of ignorance called the "Ego". So long as one has any connection with the "Ego", vile as it is, there cannot be the *least* talk about liberation (from ignorance)' (ii-vii).

He quotes J A Thomson: 'The validity of a scientific conclusion depends upon the *elimination* of

the *subjective element* ... What is most difficult of attainment and yet *indispensable* is distrust of our *personal bias* in forming judgments' (viii). 'How strongly this discipline is enforced on the seeker after *truth* in India may be gathered from what Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhāgavata* ... The essence of the teachings of Hindu *Philosophy* here is found in the following prayer of the great Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahansa: ... "One man says this, another man says that. O mother, pray, tell me what the Truth is"' (ibid.). So, this is how V Subrahmanya Iyer ends his foreword. Then Swami Nikhilananda writes a long preface describing the importance of this book. So we have finished *Agama Prakarana*. Now we come to the second book: *Vaitathya Prakarana*. Vaitathya means unreality. This chapter deals with the unreality of all duality.

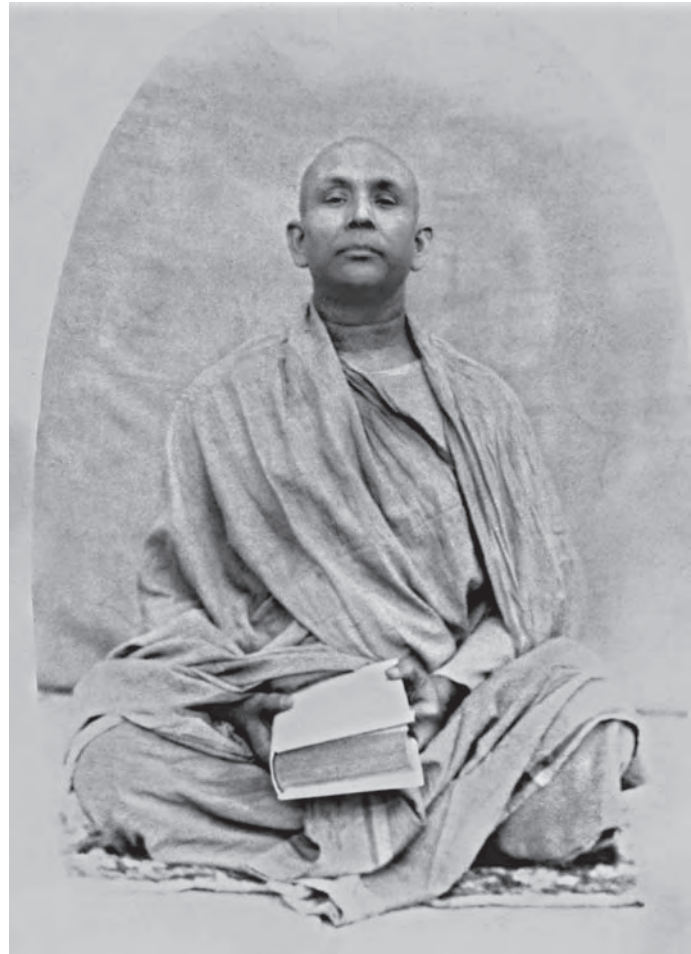
First shloka: Om. Salutation to Brahman—they begin like that. 'The wise declare the unreality of all the objects seen in the dream' (86). Everybody accepts it, isn't it? Objects seen in the dream are unreal. 'They all being located within (the body) and on account of their being in a confined space' (ibid.). How can chariots be within me? How can horses and elephants be within me? That shows that they are all unreal. Now we will see Shankara's commentary.

'*Aum*. It has been already said [in the first *Agama Prakarana*], "Duality does not exist when true knowledge arises"' (ibid.). In the physical sciences, we start with so many categories, and we reduce them one by one, until now two or three categories remain. Even that they want to overcome and make it into one. 'And this is borne out by such *Śruti* passages as, "It (*Ātman*) is verily one and without a second"' (ibid.). *Ekameva advitiyam*; one alone without a second. 'This is all based merely on the authority of the *Śruti*' (ibid.). All that is said so far in the first section is based upon the scripture, on the Upanishads, on the Shruti. 'It is also equally possible

to determine the unreality (illusoriness) of duality through pure reasoning; and for this purpose is begun the second chapter which commences with the word *Vaitathyam* (unreality) etc' (ibid.).

Tathatvam, *tatha* means as it is. *Vaitathyam* means not as it is; that means unreality. *Tatha* is the word. *Tathyam* means truth. *Vaithathyam* means untruth or unreality. 'The word, *Vaitathyam* signifies the fact of its being unreal or false. Of what is this (unreality) predicated? Of all objects, both internal and external, perceived in the dream' (ibid.). You have internal ideas and external objects in the dream—both are unreal. 'It is thus declared by the wise, *i.e.*, those who are

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experts in the use of the means (*pramāṇas*) of arriving at true knowledge. The reason of this unreality is stated thus: For, the objects perceived are found to be located within this body. All these entities such as a mountain, an elephant etc., perceived in the dream are cognized there (*i.e.*, within) and not outside the body. Therefore they must be regarded as unreal' (*ibid.*).

That is the first verse. Then a second reason is also given in the second verse: 'On account of the shortness of time it is not possible for the dreamer to go out of the body and see (the dream objects). Nor does the dreamer, when he wakes up, find himself in the place (seen in his dream)' (88). In his dream he went to San Francisco. When he woke up, he was still in Sydney. Therefore, it is not real. That is how the argument goes.

That all that is perceived to exist in dreams is located in a limited space, is not a fact. For a man sleeping in the east, often finds himself, as it were, experiencing dreams in the north. Anticipating this objection (of the opponent) it is said: The dreamer does not go to another region outside his body where he experiences dream. For, it is found that as soon as a man falls asleep he experiences dream objects, as it were, at a place which is hundreds of *Yojanas* away from his body. [A *yojana* is something like seven miles or so. An old calculation.] And which can be reached only in the course of a month. [In those days.] The long period of time which is necessary to go to that region (where dream objects are perceived) and again to come back (to the place where the sleeper lies) is not found to be an actual fact. [So time sense also makes it unreal.] Hence on account of the shortness of time the experiencer of the dream does not go to another region. Moreover, the dreamer when he wakes up, does not find himself in the place where he experiences the dream. Had the man (really) gone to another place while dreaming and cognized (or perceived) the dream-objects there, then he would have certainly woken up

there alone. But this does not happen. Though a man goes to sleep at night he feels as though he were seeing objects in the day-time and meeting many persons. (If that meeting were real) he ought to have been met by those persons (whom he himself met during the dream). But this does not happen; for if it did, they would have said, 'We met you there to-day'. But this does not happen. Therefore one does not (really) go to another region in dream (88–9).

These are all the actual statement of facts expressed here. And to take one step more, that is the most long step you have to take. Next one more verse follows the same: 'Following reason, (as indicated above) *Śruti* declares the non-existence of the chariots etc. (perceived in dream). Therefore it is said (by the wise) that *Śruti* itself declares the illusoriness (of the dream experiences), established (by reason)' (89). Reason says it is unreal. *Shruti* also says it is unreal: objects in dream.

'Different objects cognized in dream (are illusory) on account of their *being perceived to exist*' (90). Now we go one step ahead in simple logic. Objects cognized in a dream are unreal. Why? Because, they are perceived to exist as objects. In the dream the objects are unreal. Subject alone is real, mind. That aspect of the whole subject is taken now. Objects seen are unreal; the seer is real in the dream. 'For the same reason, [one jump] the objects seen in the waking state are illusory' (*ibid.*). That is the logic. The nature of the objects is the same in the waking state and the dream state. The only difference is the limitation of space, one is external, one is internal.

Here comes Shankara's commentary giving a logical form to this statement: 'The proposition to be established' (*ibid.*). What is that? 'The illusoriness of objects that *are perceived* in the waking state' (*ibid.*). He wants to establish that truth. To be perceived is to be unreal. We are taking that as the fact of the dream experience.

Dream experiences are unreal because they are perceived. The perceiver alone is real.

They are like the objects that *are perceived* in dream is the illustration ... As the objects perceived to exist in dream are illusory so also are the objects perceived in the waking state. The common feature of 'being perceived', [being *drishyam*, objects of perception] is the relation (*Upanaya*) between the illustration given and the proposition taken for consideration. Therefore the illusoriness is admitted of objects that are perceived to exist in the waking state. This is what is known as the reiteration (*Nigamanam*) of the proposition or the conclusion [of a syllogism]. The objects perceived to exist in the dream are different from those perceived in the waking state in respect of their being perceived in a limited space within the body. The fact of *being seen* and the (consequent) illusoriness are common to both (90-1).

That is the common feature of dream and waking. 'The thoughtful persons speak of the sameness of the waking and dream states on account of similarity of objects (perceived in both the states) on grounds already described' (91). This is all being seen. Anything that is seen is a perishable entity. It changes, it dies, it is unreal. When we were having this class, some swamis objected that this is not correct logical syllogism. Then we invited a professor on logic of the Mysore Sanskrit College. He came and said that this is perfectly logical syllogism. You take a common feature and regard the whole as subject. Being seen is the subject. This is being seen, that is being seen. Being seen is unreal. Therefore, waking objects are unreal. Logically it is perfectly correct. The conclusion follows from the proposition.

There is no spiritual I, only mental I. All objects are unreal. We are going to make a big proposition: all objects are unreal because they are seen as in the dream, example is given. So, waking objects are unreal. Logically, it is perfectly

correct: a proposition leading to a conclusion. In syllogism, you see: Socrates is mortal. All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal. You take mortality and then you arrive at a conclusion from the many to the one.

That is the meaning of syllogism. If the premise is accepted, the conclusion is bound to follow. Here, the premise 'being seen', is a common feature; seen as an object. This logic says that being an object is unreality. In dream don't you live several days? And, you see the same world every day. Same world you see in dream every day. You went to bed, you got up, you met the people, you ate the food—same world; perfectly logical is the dream. Dream is the waking state for the dreamer. You are speaking as a waking subject: a waking subject with a waking world, dream subject with a dream world. Dream food does not satisfy the waking stomach and the waking stomach does not satisfy the dream stomach. Is it not so? Suppose you eat well and you dream that you are hungry. What has happened to your stomach? Stomach is full but you are dreaming you are hungry. Does not a poor man dream that he is rich? Waking is an independent state and dreaming is an independent state. An ego presides over the waking state and another ego presides over the dreaming state. It is not the same self that is in both. Waking self and dream self—two different selves and both are experienced in waking. A dream is a waking state. Is it not? To the dreamer, dream is a waking state. Is he dreaming? It is a waking state. This is also a waking state. In that waking state, whatever is seen is unreal. We extend it to this also. But this is only part way that this is unreal. What is real we are going to show you. The next chapter is for that. If this is unreal, what is real?

The perceiver is real: the observer, the perceiver. It is to this that the modern scientific thought is slowly tending. What are these electrons, protons,

and these particles. They are momentary. They will not be there for even a fraction of second. And with the thick sensory system you see every thing is real: you can touch it. So, it is called real: touching, tangibility. But touching also you get in dream. You touch and fully touch and it is real, and it evaporates. One thing is real: I am attached to my waking things. Then, with that attachment, you cannot see the truth of the other experience. Attachment should not be there. See the truth as it is: detachment. I am attached to this world which I am handling everyday, then you don't get at the truth. Remove attachment. See things as it is. Then a different conclusion will come.

The whole of it is coming there, one after the other. When you are in dream, suppose somebody told you that this thing does not exist—you will protest there, certainly you will protest, and you are protesting here also. You are predicting in the dream state. Plenty of predictions you do there. That prediction is for that state. This prediction is for this state and this prediction does not apply for the dream state. This logic functions only in this state. Waking logic is only for the waking. We are discussing two states and their coordination. In dream also, you have logic. We are in search of truth. Why do we say that the dream objects are unreal? They are perishable, they are passing. Because of all these things, we say they are unreal. Alright, I say the waking objects are unreal, when I consider the whole thing is perishable. But this will be in relation to what is really imperishable. There comes the Atman. As the perceiver, he is imperishable. These things change. Waking becomes dream; dream becomes sleep, changing constantly. And then you come to who is the real perceiver. That perceiver is the constant reality. No change. To arrive at that, you start with this. The definition of what is real will come in this very text. That which is constantly changing is unreal. Vedanta only says that what

is constantly changing is unreal. That is all. Did I not quote from Einstein? He says that these molecular structures and particles—these are all unreal. The field alone is real. The field alone is real, not the temporary manifestation of the field, in particles, and in the molecular structures. What to do? Science leaves you to this trouble.

I quoted Bertrand Russell: 'Whatever we see, we see only ourselves.' Why did he say that? He is an agnostic, he is not a Vedantin. An agnostic is compelled to say because of science. Science tells you these propositions. James Jeans says in that book: 'Substantiality is a mental concept. It tells you the impinching of an object on the sense of touch. But can this be the criterion of reality?' He asks. Here you cannot touch like this and yet it is real. Many things you cannot touch, it is real. Substantiality cannot be the main criterion of reality. Nobody has touched an electron. The break from the classical to the modern physics is not an adjustment, it is a complete break. It is not an adjustment, it is a complete break. You must remove these human spectacles. What does it mean? This waking state prejudice must go. We have got a waking state prejudice. Even Freud pricked on that waking state prejudice. It is a prejudice of the waking state. Tyranny—that is all. Everything in terms of this! How can it be? This enlightened reason of the waking state—how far is it? In the waking state, a man says: 'I am a proud fellow. I am this and I am that.' The moment he goes to sleep, a child spits on his face, he cannot protest it. Can he protest? What has happened to that big ego that was there? It is complicated, meaning thereby that the world which you have conjured in the waking state is slowly dissolving and you are afraid of it. My familiar things are all going. My familiar landmark is going. Physics has destroyed a familiar landmark. We have to respect what these scientists say, though they tell you many things that are very shocking. It is

shocking to say that a separate time and separate space do not exist as separate. What exists is time-space. Then you are no more in the familiar world. In an unfamiliar world you come to in that stage.

I will just give you Heisenberg's statement here that is very interesting: 'The nineteenth century developed an extremely rigid frame for natural science which formed not only science but also the general outlook of great masses of people.'³⁴ You and I—our outlook was formed like classical science. 'This frame was supported by the fundamental concepts of classical physics, space, time, matter and causality [these four principles]; the concept of reality applies to the things or events that we could perceive by our senses or that could be observed by the means of the refined tools that technical science had provided' (ibid.). That is reality. This table, chair, desk are real—that is classical physics. 'Matter was the primary reality' (ibid.). Classical physics means waking state physics. 'The progress of science was pictured as a crusade of conquest into the material world. Utility was the watchword of the time' (ibid.). Well, it works, I can eat, I can dream—nice things are there. But this can happen in dream also I can eat, I can dream, and be happy, is it not? Sometimes, more intensely than in the waking state. In the waking state, reason is a troublesome fellow, in dream there is no reason! 'This frame was so narrow and rigid that it was difficult to find a place in it for many concepts of our language that had always belonged to its very substance, for instance, the concepts of mind, of the human soul or of life' (ibid.).

We find no place for these in Newton's classical physics. Saying this, Heisenberg says further that the breakdown of this rigid framework of classical physics became inevitable at the end of the nineteenth century with the discovery of the mass of new facts regarding the physical world, more especially, the subatomic world.

Development of the quantum and relativity theories accelerated this process through the early decades of the twentieth century until the old framework became utterly untenable. The waking framework became untenable—that is the meaning of this. The most revolutionary aspect of the change lay in repudiating the exclusively objective character of the so called objective worlds studied by science. Objective world—we say that. It is common sense, not science. If you are saying from the common sense point of view, you are right. Common sense is perfectly true! And the change of reality as a concept came as the result of this change. So, Heisenberg again continues: 'It is in quantum theory that the most fundamental changes with respect to the concept of reality have taken place, and in quantum theory in its final form the new ideas of atomic physics are concentrated and crystallized. But the change in the concept of reality manifesting itself in quantum theory is not simply a continuation of the past; it seems to be a real break in the structure of modern science' (28–9). If the waking state is now a crack, are you putting another waking state there? It is all the same. The whole thing is evaluated afresh. 'To what extent then, have we finally come to the objective description of world, especially of the atomic world?' (55).

(To be continued)

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32. See M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 653.
33. *The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad With Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṅkara's Commentary*, 79.
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Swami Premananda's Teachings

Swami Omkareshwarananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

WHEN HE SOMEHOW REGAINED the sense of direction, he stopped for a while and again looked at the path leading to Shambhu Babu's garden-house; it was clearly visible. After thinking about the path, he came back to the gate of Shambhu Babu's garden-house and attentively looking from there, he again started walking towards Rani Rasmani's garden. However, after going one or two steps, it became just like before—he could no longer see the path. It was as if the feet were pulling him to the opposite direction! This went on for some time. Then it occurred to Sri Ramakrishna: "Oh! Shambhu had said, 'You ask for some opium from me'. Instead of asking him, I took it from his employee. That is why the Divine Mother is not allowing me to go! It is not proper of the employee to have given it without Shambhu's order. And I too should have taken it from Shambhu as he had told me. Else, the manner in which I was taking opium amounted to both lying and stealing. That is why the Divine Mother is making me move around in circles in this manner and not allowing me to return." Thinking thus, he returned to Shambhu Babu's pharmacy and saw that the particular employee was not there. Hence, he threw the packet of opium into the pharmacy through the window and said in a loud voice: "O! There is your opium!" Saying thus, he started walking towards Rani Rasmani's garden. While returning this time, his feet were not pulled like before. The path also was visible quite clearly. He walked easily. Sri Ramakrishna

said: "Haven't I given the complete responsibility to the Divine Mother? That is why she is holding my hands. She does not allow me to deviate even a bit."

Baburam Maharaj said: 'I think Sri Ramakrishna is the best of all the incarnations of God till now. You may call me a sectarian or whatever else you like! I have not seen the other incarnations. I have just read about them. The extent of mark left on my heart by the fervour of the one I have seen and have lived with will be always much more deeper than of those I have just read about. I am not criticising any one. I respect all the other incarnations.

'Mahaprabhu Gauranga Chaitanya had a one-track devotion, Acharya Shankara's knowledge, and the heart of the Buddha. This time Sri Ramakrishna is not of just one kind of fervour, O my God! Knowledge, devotion, and love in one person—"As many faiths, so many paths". However, those truly qualified for the path of knowledge are rare. That is why *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* has more discussion on devotion. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell to people belonging to all religions and sects: "Go forward! Go forward! After sandalwood is the copper mine, after that is the silver mine, and after that, gold, diamond", and so on.

'A woodcutter used to collect wood from the forest and pass his days in great misery. One day he was carrying thin pieces of wood on his head, having cut them from the forest. Suddenly, a passer-by called out to him and said: "O man, go

forward!" The next day, the woodcutter followed the advice of that passer-by and having gone forward some distance, found a forest with thick wood. He cut as much wood as he could, sold it in the market and made much more money than the other days. The next day, he thought to himself: "That person had asked me to go forward. Well, why shouldn't I go forward a bit further today?" He went further ahead and found a sandalwood forest. He carried the sandalwood on his head, sold it in the market and made much money. The next day, he thought again: "He asked me to go forward." He went forward furthermore that day and found a copper mine. Not stopping at that, he progressed further ahead every day, and eventually found silver, gold, and diamond mines. He thus became very wealthy. The spiritual path is similar. Keep moving forward. Having seen some form or light or having attained some occult powers, do not get elated and think that you have attained everything.

'Keep moving forward—there is no end to the world of spirituality. With form, formless, with attributes, attributeless—according to one's path and taste. Hold on to that with one-pointed devotion and move forward—keep moving forward. Do not doubt the path—keep moving towards the goal. If you somehow reach the goal, then all doubts will be dispelled.

'Because he could not assimilate all the moods of Sri Ramakrishna, X started a sect of his own. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell: "Sect grows in a stagnant pool." You beware, beware, do not create sects. Else, Sri Ramakrishna's spirit would not remain. Beware! Do you understand what a sect is? For instance, one sect says: "Do not worship idols. What is the use of so much devotion to Ganga water? That is a combination of hydrogen and oxygen. How can it remove bad impressions?" And another sect says: "It is only proper to worship the formless Brahman with attributes.



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There is nothing such as attributeless Brahman." Some say: "There is no way other than worshipping Jesus Christ". So on and so forth. This is what is called a sect. One will get only as much as one deserves from the great ocean of Sri Ramakrishna. If one is not qualified, one may lose one's spiritual mood if one tries to follow all spiritual paths. Align your thought and speech holding on to one path and keep moving forward with steadfastness. And, do not criticise other paths.

'Sri Ramakrishna could not tuck in the mosquito net. He could not button his shirt or bolt a door. He asked us to button his shirt. If a new cloth was torn in front of him, he used to cry in pain, as if he was hurt.'

(To be continued)

Sri Ramakrishna: Scriptures Embodied

Swami Kritarthananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

In the Trail of Scriptures

STILL IN ANOTHER CONTEXT Sri Ramakrishna said: 'By touching any part of a cow you undoubtedly touch the cow herself. Even by touching her horns you touch the cow. But the milk comes through the cow's udder.'²⁴ And Acharya Shankara comments on the *Brahma Sutra*: 'If the whole abides in its totality in each part, then since the whole has competence to perform all its own functions, and since it is the same, it should perform the duties of the teats even through the horn.'²⁵

If there is an entity called God, why don't we see him? This is an age-old question asked by suspicious minds. Sri Ramakrishna's apt answers were different under different situations and to different types of aspirants. One of those answers was: 'The stars are not seen in the sky in the daytime. Does it mean they do not exist at all? As soon as the sun goes below the horizon and darkness prevails, they reveal themselves in the vault.' In the opposition's view in respect of the *Brahma Sutra* we find a similar statement: 'It is a well-known fact that the luminaries, moon, stars, and so on, do not shine in the daytime when the bright sun keeps shining.'²⁶

Like other men of realisation, Sri Ramakrishna too compared God sometimes to a wealthy person or a king, and he used to say that in order to meet the king one has to please his gatekeeper with repeated requests, bribe, or by any other means.²⁷ Shankara also holds the same view in his commentary on the *Chhandogya Upanishad*: 'In the world the gatekeepers are to be propitiated

by prayer and then they will usher in the visitor to the king's presence.'²⁸ Acharya Shankara again cites the king's illustration in his commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*: 'When a king goes to inspect some place in his kingdom, his deputed servants keep ready beforehand all the necessary provisions like victuals, carpets, and so on, in order to provide every comfort to the king.'²⁹ Sri Ramakrishna used that very simile in this way: When a rich master decides to visit the house of his servant, he 'sends various things to the house, such as a carpet, a hubble-bubble for smoking, and the like.'³⁰

Speaking on one-pointedness in concentration, Sri Ramakrishna used to tell the story of a hunter: 'A hunter was aiming at a bird. A bridal procession passed along beside him, with the groom's relatives and friends, music, carriages and horses. It took a long time for the procession to pass the hunter, but he was not at all conscious of it. He did not know that the bridegroom had gone by' (744). And what did the great Acharya Shankara say? In refuting the opponent's proposition in the *Brahma Sutra*, he said: 'The arrow-maker, whose attention had been fully engaged, says afterwards, "I was perceiving simply the arrow so long."³¹ In another context of spiritual practice, Sri Ramakrishna said: 'He who has learnt to dance correctly never makes a false step.'³² Acharya Shankara also commented on the *Brahma Sutra* thus: 'A trained actor does not ride on his own shoulder.'³³ We have similar reference in the Bhagavata, where it is said that

one, who has submitted to God never comes under delusion; even when such a person runs with closed eyes, one never falls down.³⁴

Sri Ramakrishna quite frequently used to mention one very important thing that is to be committed to memory by all spiritual aspirants. It was this simple statement: 'The goal of life is the attainment of God.'³⁵ Exactly similar view has been expressed by Acharya Shankara in a statement that corroborates the universality of the fact: 'The knowledge of Brahman leads to the highest goal of man.'³⁶ In his commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, Acharya Shankara pinpoints the same truth with more accentuation.³⁷

Sri Ramakrishna's very favourite catchphrase was: 'Go forward and stop not.' Said he: 'No matter, whether it is a mundane or spiritual pursuit.' To illustrate this he gave us the parable of a woodcutter. The translation of the word 'go forward' in the Vedas is *charaiveti*. In a couple of telling verses the Rig Veda emphasises this idea.³⁸ Swami Vivekananda took up this hint from the Vedas and declared boldly that ever since the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, Satya Yuga has started, for Sri Ramakrishna always taught people to aspire for higher things and not get stuck up in one or two achievements.

Sri Ramakrishna was never tired of instructing his devotees. Often he would repeat the same story several times, a fact corroborated in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. He himself was well aware of this. Said he: 'Hriday used to say to me: "Uncle, please don't give out your stock of instructions all at once. Why should you repeat the same things over and over again?" I would reply: "You fool, what's that to you? These are my words and if I like I shall repeat them a hundred thousand times. You keep quiet!"'³⁹ It is wonderful to note that Acharya Shankara defended in his commentary this fact of repetition in the scriptures. While commenting on the *Isha Upanishad*

he said that the verses are untiring in their emphasis. He again fortified his statement in another Upanishad thus: 'Many illustrations are meant



for understanding the multiform differences in the things illustrated, as also *for firm conviction*.'⁴⁰ Another beautiful example of Sri Ramakrishna was: 'An insignificant tenant was once engaged in a lawsuit with a big landlord. People realized that there was a powerful man behind

the tenant. Perhaps another big landlord was directing the case from behind. Man is an insignificant creature. He cannot fulfil the difficult task of a teacher without receiving power direct from God.⁴¹ Even this illustration gets its support from Acharya Shankara. He said: 'As in life a householder contending even with the king, who is the most powerful of all, so also a weak man hopes to defeat a man stronger than himself through the strength of righteousness.'⁴²

We have already seen how Sri Ramakrishna moulded his character since his childhood in the pattern laid down by our scriptures even without studying them. Now we shall see how even after he had attained to the height of spirituality his behaviour pattern continued to follow scriptural injunctions. Sri Ramakrishna could not eat anything offered by physicians, lawyers, and people of questionable character. His explanation was that physicians, lawyers, and the like extract money even from people under afflictions or straitened conditions. Manu, the lawmaker, enjoins in his code of law that a true brahmana should not eat the food given by a backbiter, nor by a habitual liar, or one who accepts money for sacrifice, an actor, or an ungrateful person.⁴³ Sri Ramakrishna was quite reserved in his discussions about God-realisation in front of one and all. When a person of Narendranath's stature enquired of God-vision, he would at once reply: 'Certainly; and even I can show you.' Again, in the case of 'M' he replied to the same question as: 'God can be seen; one has to seek him ardently and humbly.' But when a haughty man foolishly challenged him saying: 'Sir, we hear that you see God. If you do, show him to us.' Sri Ramakrishna just passed over without giving a direct answer. The reason is clearly given in the Bhagavadgita⁴⁴ and *Manu Smriti*.⁴⁵ Of these two, the latter is uncompromising and enjoins: 'One must not speak of spiritual things to another unasked, or *improperly* asked,

and should behave like an idiot before such persons.' This is exactly what Sri Ramakrishna did.

We now take the opportunity of referring to at least three occasions wherein Sri Ramakrishna cited from scriptures in terms of day-to-day examples. The *Yogavasishtasara* speaks of 'getting back' one's real nature by giving the example of one who looks for a supposedly lost necklace everywhere except around his neck out of absent-mindedness.⁴⁶ Sri Ramakrishna's version is: 'Another man looked everywhere for his towel. Finally he discovered that it had been on his shoulder all the time.'⁴⁷

The second illustration is also from the same scripture which says that a man embraces his wife and daughter with different attitudes of mind. Sri Ramakrishna gave the exact reference in the *Gospel*: 'The mind is everything. A man has his wife on one side and his daughter on the other. He shows his affection to them in different ways. But his mind is one and the same' (138).

The third occasion was his last advice to Adhar Sen, a deputy magistrate of that time. He was a close householder devotee whom Sri Ramakrishna loved very much. The latter had some hankering for higher position. But Sri Ramakrishna could foresee his untimely death breathing closely down his neck. So he warned the disciple: 'Look here. All these are unreal—meetings, school, office, and everything else. God alone is the Substance, and all else is illusory. One should worship God with one's whole mind' (413). Here Mahabharata conveys the same thing: 'One should observe piety even from youth, because life is so transient. Who knows when death stalks one?'⁴⁸

Going Beyond Scriptures

Thus Sri Ramakrishna's behaviour and attitude followed the scriptures so meticulously, even unawares, that sometimes it seemed that the

scriptures were following him. The condition of a man of wisdom as depicted in the *Vivekacudamani* fitted so exactly with his behaviour at times that one may wonder that the verses were written *after* seeing Sri Ramakrishna: 'Sometimes with and sometimes without any clothes on, sometimes like a madman, a ghoul, or a five-year old, he wanders about in the world empowered by wisdom.' Again: 'As a child plays with its toys forgetting hunger and bodily pains, the man of realisation too moves about happily without the sense of "I" or "mine".'⁴⁹ Another remarkable trait in him was that he could not tie the wearing cloth to his waist with a knot and as a result, more often than not, especially during his frequent ecstasies, his cloth would fall down of itself. Even such behaviour under an out-of-the-world mood was not a mere carelessness or freak but had its complete sanction in the Bhagavata. There it has been said: 'Just as a drunkard fails to keep his cloth tied to his waist, so a realised soul cannot take care if his mortal body remains or is destroyed.'⁵⁰ But one important thing is worth mention here to serve as a warning to all hypocrites. The scriptures say that such a man never enjoys unrestrained licence by doing as he likes, for then there will be no distinction between a dog and a knower of truth.⁵¹ That is why even though Sri Ramakrishna looked upon fallen women as veritable representations of the Divine Mother, he was extremely cautious in matters of dealing with them and always kept a safe distance. Even when he was practising tantric disciplines, and wine was brought to him as a necessary ingredient to be consumed, he didn't drink it but touched a drop on his forehead as a sign of respect, and would be merged spontaneously in the name of the real Cause of the universe.⁵² It is true that he was taken to the place where male-female couples were engaged in the most secret tantric discipline called *ananda-asana* or *bhairavi-chakra*. But wonder of wonders, the very

sight pulled him up to the level of deep absorption into the blissful aspect of the Divine Mother instead of giving rise to any mental aberration. A living free soul that he was, such precautions were not meant for himself but for the lesson of the world. And he was not only uncompromising in this respect, but sometimes observing some way-farer monks behaving out of vanity contrary to the scriptures causing utter chagrin of the local people, he would go undaunted to the person and warn him to behave in the right way, following scriptural norms and not his mental freaks.

It is given to such people alone to go sometimes beyond the scriptures even. It is said in the scriptures that a man of true realisation stands on the head of the Vedas like a crest-jewel. Once, Sri Ramakrishna was engaged in a leisurely talk with his spiritual guru Totapuri in front of a blazing fire that the latter had lighted. In the course of discussion Sri Ramakrishna asked his guru the need for practising meditation every day. The latter pointed to the brass pot of drinking water kept in front and said that in order to keep it glossy like gold it has to be scrubbed every day. But Sri Ramakrishna meant something still deeper than the general way of thinking. He forthwith asked: 'But if the water pot itself be of gold, then?' The master had to admit that no discipline of scrubbing and brushing is needed in such a case. Sri Ramakrishna actually hinted at the spontaneous state of samadhi under all circumstances. That is indeed a state beyond the jurisdiction of the ordinary scriptures. On another evening, as Totapuri was sitting before the blazing fire, of which he was an ardent worshipper, an illiterate person came in search of a fire for his hookah, and took a piece of glowing charcoal from the fire. Totapuri got terribly annoyed at the sacrilegious act of the person and turned into anger itself, as it were. But such an act threw the onlooker Sri Ramakrishna into side-splitting laughter. Surprised at such a

reaction of the disciple, the master asked him the reason thereof. Sri Ramakrishna replied that is it not ridiculous for a person who looks upon the whole universe as identified with Brahman to get overpowered with such petty things as anger? One must be true to what one preaches. This silenced the guru and he promised not to allow himself to be swept away by emotions.

We will now narrate an incident to demonstrate how a knower of Brahman stands, as it were, on the head of the Vedas. One day at Dakshineswar, the priest of Vishnu temple was carrying the image of the deity to the adjacent room when he slipped on the floor and broke the leg of the deity. Rani Rasmani was in a fix and sought the verdict of scholars of scriptures about the repair or replacement of the image. The verdict went in favour of replacement. But the Rani's heart did not consent since she had been offering her heart's love so long to the old deity; and it is not so easy to shift the focus of love to another newly-built image. Torn between the verdict of scholars and her own feeling, the Rani, maybe led by the inscrutable will of Providence, switched to the younger priest of Kali temple. And the young priest assessed the whole situation from the Vedantic point of view. Vedanta has made its invulnerable basis with three strong weapons of Shruti, scriptural injunction; *yukti*, reason; and *anubhuti*, feeling. Among these, the second is an analytic function, that is, intellectual power; and the third is that of the heart. Our scriptures say that the heart is the repository of the intellect. Now, according to Acharya Shankara: 'When a thing is the support of another, the former is more powerful than the latter.'⁵³ The main point here is that the three items named above are three steps from lower to higher. In other words, *yukti* is higher than Shruti, and *anubhuti* is higher than *yukti*. So Sri Ramakrishna saw that all the scholars unanimously sided with the first two only, but did not care for the last or the highest

one. On the other side stood the Rani with her wholehearted devotion, but devoid of the power to oppose the scholars. Under such circumstances, Sri Ramakrishna came forward to fulfil the devotee's desire. He stood, as it were, on the head of the scriptures and gave his verdict: 'If any son-in-law of the Rani breaks his leg due to an accident, will she discard him and look for another? Or will she get the latter medically treated and cured? So let the old image be mended and the daily services of worship go on as before.' Later, Sri Ramakrishna himself mended the broken leg with a sculptor's adept hand and re-established the deity in its old throne. And lo! The whole rank of scholars accepted the verdict without any opposition. How? Behind that verdict was an inexorable force which no mortals can counter. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* clearly states: 'In this state the scriptures become nullified, the world becomes zero, and the gods lose their resplendence.'⁵⁴ This is the significance of going beyond the scriptures.

The Significance of Symbol Worship

There is an age-old dispute between image or symbol worshippers and the followers of God without attributes or form. A careful study of our primary scriptures can settle this dispute quite easily. In refuting the opponent's misleading view the *Brahma Sutra* brings in a discussion on symbols. An aphorism says: 'The aspirant should not identify himself with a symbol, for he cannot understand himself to be so.'⁵⁵ We in India are quite familiar with the worship of symbols. But many do not know the inherent truth behind that. The fact is that some particular stone or wood reminds one of God with certain attributes. This is called superimposition of a superior entity on an inferior one. Acharya Shankara clarifies this point in his commentary on the next aphorism that says: 'The sun, and the like are to be looked upon as Brahman because of the consequent exaltation.'⁵⁶ He says: 'It is seen that the

king's charioteer is honoured as the king himself. This is a case of superimposition of the higher on the inferior. But the king is never looked upon as the charioteer.⁵⁷ Sri Ramakrishna served this very truth to 'M' with a masterstroke of an expert artist when the latter objected to image worship arguing: 'Certainly God is not the clay image!' To this Sri Ramakrishna promptly replied: 'But why clay? It is an image of Spirit.'⁵⁸ By this he meant that though the image is made of clay, wood, stone, and the like, clay has no importance so far as worship is concerned. The image or the symbol is built on the thought of Brahman with various attributes. And the worshipper invokes life into that clay image before offering worship to the deity. After worship the vital force is withdrawn by the worshipper from the clay image to his own heart, and the image is consigned to water to be dissolved in it, but the living spirit will endure forever in the heart of the devotee. Sri Ramakrishna further explained this point to 'M': 'You were talking of worshipping the clay image. Even if the image is made of clay, there is need for that sort of worship. God Himself has provided different forms of worship. He who is the Lord of the Universe has arranged all these forms to suit different men in different stages of knowledge. The mother cooks different dishes to suit the stomachs of her different children' (81).

Sri Ramakrishna applied this very truth in pacifying the stubbornness of Mathuranath. When the latter, in an ecstatic mood, refused to immerse the image of the Divine Mother Durga in water, Sri Ramakrishna said to him: 'So long the Mother accepted your worship by living in the image. From now she will live in your heart.' And this solved the impending problem.

Ultimately this act of superimposition of the superior on the inferior leads to the worship of God in living beings. People in India are seen to feed animals, birds, famished people, and the like, as part of worship. This type of service

based on worship helps the aspirant overcome his human limitations and formulate his own life on higher thoughts. He will not see the gross form of the object of worship or its limitations. The inherent divinity of all beings will reign supreme in his heart. By transforming the scriptural theory of immanence of God into the great maxim: '*Shiva jnane jiva seva*; worship of the jiva knowing it to be Shiva.' Sri Ramakrishna gave the world a new message of living happily.

Going Beyond Samadhi

There is a very common faulty belief among some people that samadhi is the end-point or consummation of spiritual life. Those who have walked the path of spiritual life, however, say just the opposite, that is, real spiritual life begins with samadhi. This raises another doubt: If samadhi means realisation of God, then what remains to be further realised? Sri Ramakrishna has given a fitting answer to this question in his characteristic candid way: 'If one is able somehow to reach Calcutta, one can see the Maidan and the museum and other places too. The thing is how to reach Calcutta' (468). Here 'coming to Calcutta' signifies entering samadhi. It is only after one reaches there that one can be guided to various places in that realm. To know that God *is* implies a distant knowledge about him; this is called *jnana* in Indian terminology; whereas, to meet him and know from him about his territory, possessions, and so on, is known as *vijnana* in India. To put it in Sri Ramakrishna's language: 'There is a stage beyond even Brahman-jnana. After jnana comes vijnana' (287). Acharya Shankara also gave exactly similar definitions of the two terms in his commentary on the Gita. In his opinion: '*Jnana* implies forming an overall concept about the Atman, having known about it from the preceptor and the scripture; whereas *vijnana* is to realise that in particular.'⁵⁹ He also said in his commentary on the sixth chapter of


the Gita: '*Jnana* is the overall knowledge of the objects mentioned in the scriptures; but *vijnana* is the name of relating to oneself the knowledge as it is gained from scriptures.'⁶⁰ This very phenomenon of relating to oneself has been represented by Sri Ramakrishna as 'getting nourished by milk'.

The long and short of it is that only a real knower of Brahman, *Brahma-vijnani*, knows clearly about every nook and cranny of that difficult path; and so, such a person alone can tell with confidence the subtle difference between the four statuses, namely, *brahmavid*, *brahmavid-vara*, *brahmavid-variyan*, and *brahmavid-varishtha*. Madhusudana Sarasvati, the great exponent of Advaita Vedanta from Bengal, has discussed all these states in his gloss on the Gita⁶¹ by quoting from the *Laghu-Yoga-Vasishtha*. Therein the sage Vasishtha has described a knower of Brahman in terms of seven different stages, namely, the plane of knowledge called good resolve, deliberation, fineness of the mind, experience of Reality, non-relationship, absence of objects, reaching the *turiya*.⁶² The glossator then goes on to explain: Among these the first is the desire for liberation, which starts from discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal, and the like, and culminates in its fruit. Then, after approaching the guru, *vichara* in the form of *shravana* and *manana* on the Upanishadic texts is the second. Then the third is the ability of the mind to grasp subtle things with concentration accomplished through the practice of *nididhyasana*. These three stages are called the waking state by the yogis. That yogi who has reached the fourth stage is called *brahmavit*. To him the world appears as a dream. However, the fifth, sixth, and seventh stages are the secondary divisions of *jivanmukti* itself. The state of *nirvikalpa-samadhi*, which comes when the mind becomes withdrawn through the practice of *savikalpa-samadhi*, is called *asamsakti*, non-relationship and *sushupti*, deep sleep. From this

state the yogi emerges by oneself. One attaining to this state is called *brahmavid-vara*. The sixth state called *padarthabhavani* and deeper sleep is a state from which the yogi cannot come out by one's own effort but has to be awakened by others. Such a yogi is called *brahmavid-variyan*. The seventh stage called *turiyaga* is one of total absence of perception of duality. From this state the yogi cannot emerge either by own efforts or through that of others, but remains in every way self-absorbed, as a mass of supreme bliss alone, with the bodily functions managed by others, and the vital forces controlled by the supreme Lord. One attaining this stage is called *brahmavid-varishtha*.⁶³

The various states of ecstasies and absorption experienced by Sri Ramakrishna tally in every respect with the above discussion. When he went into a deep thought of Shiva while enacting as the god or when he listened to the glories of the Divine Mother on his way to the temple of Vishalakshi, he was in the fourth stage of ecstasy mentioned above. At that time, as per his narrative, the whole world appeared as a dream. Next, during his madness for a vision of the Divine Mother at the Kali temple in Dakshineswar, when he was endowed with a vision of Her, he had attained the fifth state, for he came back to normal consciousness with his own effort. When, under the guidance of Totapuri, he attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi by just three days' effort, he was brought back to consciousness only by his guru. That state of absorption tallies fully with the sixth state mentioned above. But even after that he developed a desire to enjoy the state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi unceasingly, he remained in that state continuously for six months, and his body function was maintained by providence while an unknown monk who stayed by him for that whole period pushed in food through his mouth by force, just to keep his body alive.

Judging by such scriptural standards, one thinks in mute wonder as to who this Sri Ramakrishna

was. All his states of samadhi had clear sanction of the scriptures. Hence one is left with no doubt that he was a knower of Brahman par excellence. It is he and he alone who had the right to say that there are stages even beyond samadhi. Such men only deserve the worship of all as *avatara-varishtha*, the best of incarnations. In the course of time so many other facts about his life and teachings will be uncovered, enabling people to have a more in-depth understanding of his life in the light of the scriptures. The devout heart cannot but sing paeans of joy in his name and say: 'O God! O indweller of all beings, Sri Ramakrishna! Who is ever capable of singing the true glory of you who are beyond all concepts and repeller of all misery? Hence I offer you my homage.'⁶⁴ 

Notes and References

24. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 883.
25. 'Yadi gotvadivat pratyekam parisamaptah avayavi syat, yatha gotvam prativyakti pratyaksham grihyate, evam avayavi api pratyavayavam pratyaksham grihyeta. Na cha evam niyatam grihyate. Pratyekaparisamaptau cha avayavinah karyena adhikarat, tasya cha ekatvat, shrin-genapi stanakaryam kuryat.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 2.1.18).
26. 'Tejasvabhavakam hi chandra-tarakadi tejah-svabhavake eva surye bhasamane ahani na bhasate iti prasiddham.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 1.3.22). Although it comes in the opponent's proposition, we quote it since it is a common experience to all.
27. See *Gospel*, 482.
28. 'Loke dvarapalah rajnah upasanena vashikritah rajapraptyartha bhavanti.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 3.13.1).
29. See Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.3.37.
30. *Gospel*, 203.
31. 'Ishukaro jagradapi ishvasaktamanastaya na anyan vishayan ikshate; ishukaro hi vyapritam-ana braviti, "ishumeva aham etavantam kalam upalabhamana abhuvam."' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 3.2.10).
32. *Gospel*, 220.
33. 'Na hi natah shikshitah san svaskandham adhi-rohati.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 3.3.54).
34. See Bhagavata, 11.2.35.
35. *Gospel*, 453.
36. 'Brahmavidya purushartha-sadhanam.' (Acharya Shankara's introductory commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.4.1).
37. See 'Brahmavagatih hi purusharthah.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra*, 1.1.1).
38. See *Aitareya Brahmana*, 7.15.4-5: 'Kalih shayano bhavati, sanjihanastu dvaparah, uttishthamstreta bhavati, kritam sampadyate charan—charaiveti charaiveti. Charan vai madhu vindati, charan svadum udumbaram, pashya suryasya shremanam yon a tandrayate charan—charaiveti charaiveti.'
39. *Gospel*, 1026.
40. Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Isha Upanishad*, 5: 'Na mantranam jamita asti.' Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.1.6: 'Aneka drishtanta upadanam darshantika-aneke-bheda-anugamartham dridapratityartham cha.'
41. *Gospel*, 168.
42. Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 1.4.14: 'Yatha loke rajna sarvabalavattamena api kutumbikah (tatha dur-balatarah atmano balavattaram api dharmena balena jetum kamayate).'
43. See *Manu Smriti*, 4.214: 'Pishunanritinoshchan-nam kratu-vikrayinastatha, shailusha-tantuvay-annam kritaghnyasyannameva cha.'
44. See *Gita*, 18.67: 'Idam te natapaskaya nabhaktaya kadachana, na chashushrushave vachyam na cha mam yo'bhyasuyati; this (that I have taught) you should not ever be taught to one who is devoid of austerities and to one who is not a devotee; also, neither to one who does not render service, nor as well to one who cavils at Me.'
45. See *Manu Smriti*, 2.110: 'Naprishtah kasyachid bruyan-na chanyayena prichchatah, janana-napi hi medhavi jadavalloka acharet.'
46. See *Yogavasishthasara*, 1.14: 'Svakanthe'pi sthitam vastu yatha na prapyate bhramat, bhramante prapyate tadvadatmapa guruvakyatah.'

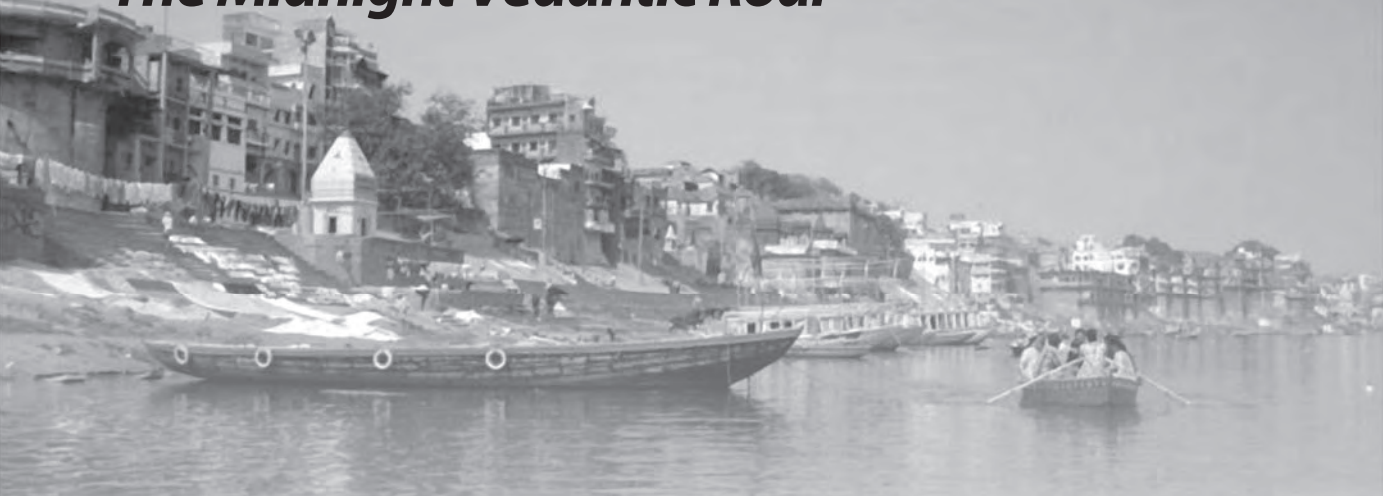
47. *Gospel*, 515.
48. Mahabharata, 12.169.14: 'Yuvaiva dharmashilah syad animittam hi jivitam, ko hi janati kasyadya mrityukalo bhavishyati.'
49. *Vivekachudamani*, 540, 537.
50. *Bhagavata*, 11.13.36.
51. See Sureshvaracharya, *Naishkarmyasiddhih*, 4.62: 'Buddhadvaita-satattvasya yatheshtacharanam yadi, shunam tattvavidam chaiva ko bhedo'shuchibhakshane.'
52. Wine is called in many Indian languages as *karana-vari*. The word *karana* also means 'cause' in Sanskrit.
53. Acharya Shankara's commentary on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 5.14.4: 'Yasmin hi yadashritam bhavati, tasmad ashritad ashrayasya balavattaram prasiddham.'
54. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 4.3.22: 'Atra loka alokah, deva adevah, veda aveda bhavanti.'
55. *Brahma Sutra*, 4.1.4: 'Na pratike na hi sah.'
56. *Brahma Sutra*, 4.1.5: 'Brahmadrishtir-utkarshat.'
57. 'Utkrishtadrishtir-hi nikrishte adhyasitavya iti laukiko nyayah, yatha rajadrishtih kshattari. Na hi kshatradrishhti-parigrihito raja nikarsham niyamanah shreyase syat.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on *Brahma Sutra*, 4.1.5).
58. *Gospel*, 80.
59. 'Jnanam shastratah acharyatashcha atmadinam avabodhah; vijnanam visheshatah anubhavah.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the Gita, 3.41).
60. 'Jnanam shastrokta-padarthanam parijnanam; vijnanam tu shastrato jnatanam tatha eva svanubhavakaranam.' (Acharya Shankara's commentary on the Gita, 6.8).
61. See Madhusudana Sarasvati's commentary on the Gita, 3.18.
62. See *Laghu-Yoga-Vasishtha*, Lavana-Upakhyaana, 3.9.13, 14: 'Jnanabhumih shubhechchakhyah prathama parikirtita, vicharana dvitiya syat tritiya tanumanasa, sattvapattish-chaturthi syat tato'samsaktinamika, padarthabhavani shashthi saptami turyaga smrita.'
63. See Madhusudana Sarasvati's commentary on the Gita, 3.18.
64. 'Tvam stotum ko'tra shaktah syad bhavatitam anamayam, Bhagavan sarvabhutatman ramakrishna namo'stu te'. A hymn by Swami Abhedananda.

Panchavati at Dakshineswar



TRADITIONAL TALES

The Midnight Vedantic Roar



Long ago, there lived a devout old man in Madhavapuri. Increasing his devotion to God was the only aim of his life. Every day he performed his spiritual austerities of japa and meditation without fail. He never deviated from his goal. He continued his spiritual austerities with conviction and achieved considerable spiritual progress in time. Eventually, many youngsters sought his spiritual counsel. He lucidly and convincingly explained to them that the only goal of life was to be devoted to God. He preached what he practised. He practised what he preached.

Learning from this old man, many youngsters led a purposeful life devoted to God. The old man taught in this manner for many years and became very old. He realised that his end was near and wished to spend his last days in Varanasi. His disciples surmised his desire and four of them approached him and said to him with devotion and humility: 'Sir, we can do as you wish. The four of us will carry you in a palanquin to Varanasi. If we travel continuously for some days, we can quickly reach Varanasi.' The old man was happy with these disciples, who wanted to fulfil his last wish and agreed to the proposal.

Accordingly, the disciples carried their guru on a palanquin and proceeded to Varanasi. The journey continued for several days. The young disciples moved rapidly and were close to Varanasi.

Meanwhile, the old man became aware of his impending death. He asked: 'Where is the palanquin going through?' He wanted to confirm whether the palanquin had reached Varanasi. But then, the palanquin was still a few hours away from Varanasi. Hence, the disciples replied: 'Sir, the palanquin is now near a drummers' slum.' These were the last words the guru heard.

Indian rishis had realised the truth that a person's thoughts at the time of death determine that person's next birth. Since he had heard the words 'drummers' slum' while dying, he was born in a drummers' slum in his next birth. However, the good tendencies of his previous austere lifetime did not go in vain. He was born in the house of a drummer who served the king. That drummer used to patrol the capital the entire night. Every three hours, he used to drum while walking on the streets and used to caution people: 'Thieves beware! Thieves beware! Be careful! Be careful!' The king had made this

arrangement to prevent thieves from engaging in their nefarious activities. In his next birth, the old guru was born as a son to this drummer. He retained the spiritual mood of his earlier lifetime in this birth too.

The son of the drummer had an inexplicable hatred for the world. Most people lived ignorant of their true nature. And so, the drummer's son avoided the company of the worldly. He preferred staying aloof. He never spoke to anyone. Seeing him behave in such a manner, his family members and other people took him to be dumb by birth. The drummer considered his son to be a hopeless fool, who was good for nothing. And so, he let his son be and left him to his own ways. The son too grew up in his own way.

Once, the drummer had to suddenly visit a neighbouring city on an urgent work. He explained his position to the king. He said that his son would patrol the city in place of him that night. The king agreed to this. The king used to inspect the city in the night in disguise. He thought: 'How would this dumb fool properly do his work?' Hence, he decided: 'Let me secretly observe what this dumb would do tonight.' The dusk fell and soon it was dark. The first quarter of the night also arrived. The drummer's son patrolled the city, walking the streets and drumming. Unknown to him, the king was following. It was time to cry out the caution, beating the drum. The king was hiding and thinking: 'What would the dumb son do now?'

The drummer's son walked the streets crying out the caution: '*Kamah krodhashcha lobhashcha debe tishtanti taskarah, jnanaratna apaharaya, tasmajagrata jagrata*'; lust, anger, and greed are thieves who reside in the body. They will snatch away the gem of self-knowledge. Hence, beware, beware!' The king, who was observing in hiding, was surprised. He was overjoyed when he realised: 'This young man is not really dumb. He is a *jivanmukta*, free even while living in the body.'

The first quarter of the night passed and the second quarter arrived. The king was still hiding and was watching the great *jivanmukta*, who cried out beating his drum: '*Janma dukkham jara dukkham, jaya dukkham punah punah, samsara-sagaram dukkham, tasmajagrata jagrata*'; birth is suffering, old age is suffering. Wife is suffering. Taking birth over and again is also suffering. Hence, beware, beware!' The king listened to these resonating words of the young *jivanmukta*.

In the third quarter the young man cried out beating the drum: '*Mata nasti pita nasti, nasti bandhub sahodarah, artham nasti griham nasti, tasmajagrata jagrata*'; there is no mother, there is no father, there are no relatives, there are no siblings. There is no wealth, there is no house. Hence, beware, beware!' The king listened to these words of the *jivanmukta* also. He secretly followed the *jivanmukta* to various streets.

The fourth quarter arrived. The young man cried out the caution beating the drum: '*Ashaya badhyate loke, karmana bahu chintaya, ayu kshinam na janati, tasmajagrata jagrata*'; the world is bound by hope, none realises life going away in work and many worries. Hence, beware, beware!'

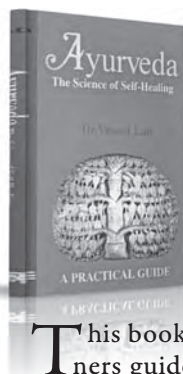
The king was enchanted by the Vedantic truths proclaimed by the young man in the four quarters of the night. He mentally prostrated before the *jivanmukta*. He returned to his palace thinking that he would give this great *jivanmukta* any job he wished in the palace, if he kindly consented to it. The next day dawned. The drummer came to meet the king. The king told him: 'Your son, who has lived like a dumb till now, is not really dumb. He is a *jivanmukta*. That such a great person is living in our country is definitely due to the merits of our ancestors. It would be nice if he could once visit this palace. Please convey my request to him.'

Accordingly, the drummer brought his son to the palace.

(To be concluded)

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



**Ayurveda:
The Science of Self-Healing—
A Practical Guide**

Dr Vasant Lad

Motilal Banarsidass, 41, U.A., Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. 2011. 175 pp. ₹ 195. PB. ISBN 9788120818392.

This book is the most comprehensive beginners guide to Ayurveda. Dr Lad has been a practitioner and professor at the Ayurvedic Institute in New Mexico since 1984. He is one of the most respected teachers or authors to learn about Ayurveda in the West. Dr Lad has published other noteworthy works like *Secrets of the Pulse*, *Ayurvedic Perspectives on Selected Pathologies*, *Textbook of Ayurveda* (in three volumes), *Marma Points of Ayurveda*, *Ayurvedic Cooking for Self-Healing*, and countless other articles or summits and joint text contributions. In this text, in less than two hundred pages, Dr Lad bridges the theory and foundations of Ayurveda, the science of life, in a very straightforward way.

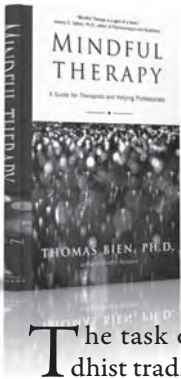
In an organised fashion this book lays out the basic principles and foundation of Ayurveda, making it easy for the lay person to comprehend. The preface exclaims that this book grew out of a strong belief that Ayurveda should be shared with Westerners in this practical way. According to Dr Lad: 'The science of Ayurveda is based not on constantly changing research data, but on the eternal wisdom of the *rishis* who received this science, expressive of the perfect wholeness of Cosmic Consciousness, through religious introspection and meditation. Ayurveda is a timeless science and the reflection and elucidation here, it is hoped, will serve the reader throughout his or her life' (13).

This book provides concise description of the

main constitutions—*vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*—as well as daily routines advised for each; including, diet, herbal remedies, exercises, pranayama, and therapeutic treatments. There are clear diagrams of descriptions of these principles to help the reader gain a visual sense of how each concept is related; such as key descriptions and body systems that are associated with each *dosha*, constitution. Reading this book you will gain an understanding on how to move forward in addressing basic needs associated with your own constitution. There are also very helpful sections in this book that provide diagnostic tools for measuring states of health and disease utilising analysis of the tongue, pulse, nails, eyes, urine, stool, lips, and face.

As a practitioner myself, I refer newcomers to this book as a way to gain basic understanding of what Ayurveda can do for them in a day-to-day practical sense. Dr Lad helps elucidate what Ayurveda looks like in the body, mind, and how it can be used to address imbalance or maintain balance in one's life. This book is a great start for anyone who wants to understand the basics of the comprehensive tradition of Ayurveda and segue into deeper discussions and topics in the field. I would offer that those with more clinical background in Ayurveda may not be fully satisfied as this power-packed book does not reach deep into topics, but this guide could always be useful for quick reference. Dr Lad helps bring Eastern Ayurveda, a sometimes esoteric, ritual-based, and consistently beautiful science of healing, into our modern focus; helping us in the West to integrate it into our minds, hearts, and ever expanding culture.

Melissa Yaden, DAOM, AWP, LMP
Ayurveda and Chinese Medicine Practitioner
Port Townsend,
Washington State, USA



**Mindful Therapy:
A Guide for Therapists and
Helping Professionals**

Thomas Bien

Wisdom Publications, Inc., 199
Elm Street, Somerville MA 02144,
USA. Website: www.wisdompubs.org.
2006. xviii + 273 pp. \$17.95. PB. ISBN
9780861712922.

The task of a talk-therapist within the Buddhist tradition(s) should be to make a patient rise above doctrines aka *fixations*, to make certain that the caregiver is a good listener and the patient finally sees the transitoriness of all things including the flow of time. In classical psychotherapy the stress is on seeing the self in the process of being actualised. There is a fixed target in practising psychotherapy in the West; generally, the control and not always, the cure of mental diseases. The aim is to make the patient euthymic, flat affect is often acceptable over aggression and the implied target is restoring some *quality of life* to the patient. Within Buddhist psychology these targets are subsumed by the journey to nirvana. Why should anyone howsoever mentally ill not have a chance to experience Buddhahood in the here and the now?

Bien's book makes the way to Buddhahood a little easier. Bien's book does not discard modern science regarding brain anomalies, various established talk-therapies, or classical psychoanalysis while reframing the cures of the psychic apparatus within Buddhist matrices and at the same time is intended to be used by practising therapists since 'Therapy is not easy work. If [one is] a psychotherapist, a counsellor, or anyone who routinely seeks to relieve suffering in others through any of the arts involving deep listening and true presence ... [then one is] part of a long line of healers and shamans, of gurus and bodhisattvas stretching back to the beginning of human history and even earlier still' (3). In the section *Science is not Enough* (5–8), Bien establishes the need for scientific rigour while caring for patients: 'While it is necessary that we claim our role as spiritual teachers and healers, we also need a way to fulfill that role, a way that feels possible, practical, and

human-sized. ... We require a vision for our psychotherapy practice that is at the same time lofty and practical, head in the clouds, perhaps, but feet firmly on the ground' (7–8).

While Bien will go on to discuss Buddhist psychology he will not discard the findings of say, Carl Rogers, whose views on loving-compassion are 'accurate empathy' (134) as the Buddhists would define *karuna*, compassion. It is this loving-compassion which Bien insists must be found in mental healthcare professionals: 'If therapy is a real human encounter, *of course* ... [the therapist] will think about ... [her or his] patients from time to time [outside of therapeutic sessions]' (135). But for those who obsess with their patients, Bien sees a real problem: they need to 'cultivate equanimity' (ibid.). To those who question the need of some people to become therapists, Bien has this to say; and what a wonderful way to see the instinctive urge to help others:

How fortunate we are to have work that involves the practice of love and compassion! How different it is, for example, from the commodities broker on the floor of the exchange, a phone in each ear, yelling and gesticulating, face contorted with stress. People who work in difficult jobs involving aggressive competition during the day will be more exhausted by it than a therapist who cultivates love and compassion by means of understanding toward herself and her patients all day long (136).

Bien humanises the talk-therapies as he does the caregiver and patient dyad. Who would have thought that being a talk-therapist was a form of Buddhist practise in mindfulness? Those of us who are trained to help others in the latter's journey towards *mukti* or nirvana will find great solace in this book, especially in the second part, *Buddha as Therapist*. There Bien has practical counsel for therapists: 'Before the start of your work day, review the patients you will see that day. Imagine life from their perspective, what it feels like to be them. ... Spend a little time meditating on each patient' (65). It is refreshing that Bien deals with the thorny issue of a therapist's fee in this book and connects session-fees to the patient's 'preoccupation with money' and the latter's failure to

understand that 'anyone could earn money from working with him and care about him at the same time' (ibid.).

This reviewer has been in the profession of helping people recover from mental trauma and finds that most people find paying fees for their sessions akin to simony. But therapists need to earn their living while remaining sane; therefore, this book is a must read handbook for therapists. We will now turn to Bien's treatment of the psychic apparatus. This has to be interrogated to see where he differs from classical and accepted constructions of the mind. Before we proceed to that, I am heartened to see that through all Bien's constructions of the mind according to Buddhist metaphysics he is solidly grounded in modern science as has been mentioned earlier in this review: 'Hostility triggers the release of the hormones epinephrine, norepinephrine, cortisol, and for men, testosterone. Testosterone and cortisol in turn trigger the creation of cholesterol. Anger also triggers high blood pressure and poor digestion' (255). Bien refers and more importantly, accepts contemporary researchers.

Without his claims being empirically sustainable within scientific literature and the experience of being a therapist, he would just be speculating and this book would be another useless scholarly effort at armchair philosophising about the mind. Practical talk-therapy has little to do with epistemology but everything to do with calming a person with diagnosed drug-resistant schizophrenia. If we neglect the empirical orientation of Bien and first do not prove that he is a scientist, his advocacy of Buddhist theories about the mind will not hold water in today's rapidly progressing field of psychiatric pharmacology. The following paragraph is unique in the vast literature on schizophrenia: 'Perhaps the new theories about schizophrenia are more correct. It would certainly be difficult to deny the utility of antipsychotic medication, for example. But we should in no event be fooled into believing that people in times past were less intelligent than we are because they lacked MRIs or electron microscopes. And just because we have a new kind of evidence does not necessarily mean the old evidence is invalid' (111).

Bien shows elsewhere in this book how classical psychoanalysis has not been proved entirely wrong in spite of better understanding of the brain in positing that the Father figure's absence contributes to the development of schizophrenia. This long discussion about Bien's scientific moorings is necessary to ensure that he is not normatively discarded for being / as a Buddhist psychologist. He is a psychologist who has found value in the teachings of the Buddha. In no way is his scientific credibility reduced by his rigorous interrogation and espousal of Buddhist therapy which is rooted in the Zen praxis of mindfulness.

Working with Emotion: Buddhist Psychology (189–211) is an antidote to the emphasis on the libidinal in classical psychoanalysis with its horizontal divisions of the mind as being primarily regulated by the Pleasure Principle, popularly known as the *Id*. This emphasis on repression and the Pleasure Principle robs a person of volition and agency. It is as if whatever we do is beyond our control; there can be no mindfulness within classical psychoanalysis since the mind imagined vertically is constituted of mostly the Unconscious. Only through Freudian slips and *dream work* can we know our true natures. And our true natures according to Freud and his disciples are unspeakable and there is nothing within us except the muck of desires, which are not really muck according to psychoanalysts! For a discussion on this see Elizabeth Wright, *Speaking Desires Can Be Dangerous: The Poetics of the Unconscious* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999). Bien corrects this: in this entire chapter he makes a case for the mind according to one of the three authoritative Buddhist texts, the *Abhidharma-pitaka*. A student of psychology or even a psychiatrist should study Bien's presentation of the *Abhidharma-pitaka's* construction of the mental machinery to seek solutions to mental diseases not only in childhood or within Locke's theories of the tabula rasa but what is known as *bija* within Buddhism and *samskaras* within Hinduism.

The book has ample real-life case histories and thus makes the talk-therapies humane. If one were to read anyone from the *Tel Quel* group one would think that the talk-therapies were just mere theorising. The Buddha's aim was to end

suffering and the aim of the psychotherapist is the same—this simple fact gives more credibility to Bien's project than the tortuous writings of those whose entire lives are spent in analysing Freud and Jung in classrooms and seminars. It is difficult to cure a person; let alone to help that person reach *insight*. Then how difficult it must be to lead both the therapist and the patient both through and to mindfulness and then to the cessation of suffering? This book has practical implications for those helping others. This reviewer recently had a young lady confide to him that she is afraid of water and finds meaning in disjointed events—likes shadows, images of gods and goddesses, and the like. My training teaches me to tease out the childhood events of this person and label her as an obsessive-psychotic. In fact, I tried to locate her fears to some childhood sexual trauma. There were none and the lady was slightly discomfited when I tried to ask her about her intimate experiences. The transference and counter-transference mechanism was hindered in the process.

Bien forces me to rethink her condition in the light of Buddhist psychology and if I can see things in the light of Buddhism, why should I not think of what say, Hinduism, specifically the Tantras have to say about phobias? Where Bien stresses the annihilation of greed and anger and the lower passions; other talk-therapists of repute revel in encouraging the darkness in our hearts to have unbridled sway over us. The Bhagavadgita warned us much before the Buddha to control our minds; today's psychoanalysts will pooh-pooh the Gita as repressive. It is fine for Bien to locate mindfulness within Buddhism but he should have been a more careful researcher and ought to have pointed out that most of his exercises for therapists given in this book have their origins within Hindu canons. Bien's otherwise excellent book does not even passingly mention the debt that Buddhist psychology owes to Hindu texts, including the *agamas* and the *nigamas*. Buddhist psychology derives from Hindu psychology. Three other points need to be mentioned, Bien has no control group to show the efficacy of Buddhist talk-therapy over other established therapies. Neither does he take into account the fact

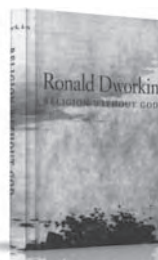
that empirical research shows that meditation and the practice of mindfulness during the onset or the course of a psychiatric illness worsens the condition and thus should not be used while the patient is non-euthymic. Further, if Bien had clearly defined Buddhism, it would have helped us in locating his book within one or the other of the Buddhist traditions of mindfulness. Also it is disconcerting that nowhere is the great Vasubandhu (circa 4th to 5th century CE), that skilled Buddhist psychotherapist, explicitly mentioned within this book.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

Psychoanalyst

Assistant Professor of English

Ramananda College, Bishnupur



Religion Without God

Ronald M Dworkin

Harvard University Press, 79 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. 2013. ix + 180 pp. \$ 17.95. HB. ISBN 9780674726826.

In this collection of the Einstein Lectures delivered by the author at the University of Bern in December 2011, we find succinct and striking arguments that try to distinguish the debates on God from those on religion. Dworkin points out the religiosity prevalent in science and situates atheism also as 'religious'. He questions the reason in associating the 'minor premise' (26) of a God with values. He argues how the beauty, unity, and symmetry of the universe are accepted by both science and religion. He delves into the constitutional and legal challenges of religious freedom and how such freedom can challenge many social values: 'If we are to limit the protection of religious belief to godly religion, we must find our justification not in the science department of orthodox religions but rather in their other department, in the values they sponsor' (113). This book is a small dart that has hit on the bull's eye of the problematic of religion and god and should be read by anyone who believes or prefers not to.

Editor

Prabuddha Bharata

MANANA

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Body of Truth

Harriet Brown

Da Capo Press, 44 Farnsworth Street, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02210. 2015. xxx + 273 pp. \$25.99. HB. ISBN 9780738217697.

WE'RE IN THE midst of an epidemic, one that's destroying both the quality and the longevity of our lives. It affects not just us but our children, and likely their children, too. And while this epidemic has been around a while, it's growing at an alarming rate, not just here but around the world. You'd be hard-pressed to find a twenty-first-century culture that *didn't* struggle with it.

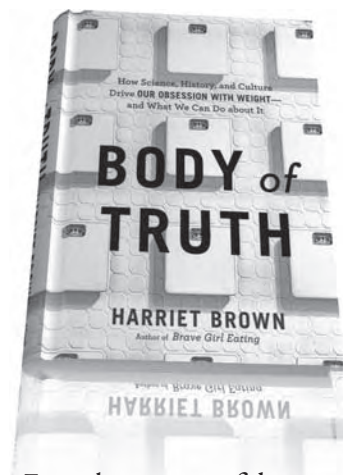
I've interviewed hundreds of women about weight and body image over the last few years, and every one of them says she has struggled with body hatred, or continues to struggle, to one degree or another. Too many of us waste our time, our emotional energy, our very sanity trying to meet the ever-more-rigid rules about what size and shape our bodies are supposed to be. Even for women who get it, who know intellectually that the quest to be thin is ultimately both fruitless and pointless, it's unbelievably tough to challenge the cultural norms around weight.

The barrage of prescriptive messages starts early. Several studies have shown that three- and four-year-olds are afraid of getting fat, and no wonder: They're primed to absorb and internalize the lessons we teach them, which in this case means shame about their bodies and self-loathing. Even if they don't hear it at home, they get it from TV shows, books, teachers, doctors, games, and

other children. Even the most confident women struggle to navigate a daily gauntlet of images and messages warning us of the psychological, social, and physical perils of not meeting society's unattainable body ideals. And this isn't just a women's issue, either; men and boys are increasingly caught up in their own variation of body anxiety. Women want to be thin; men want to be buff. Women want thigh gaps; men want six-packs.

This obsession isn't new, of course; my friends and I spent many miserable hours in front of the mirror as teens in the 1970s. What *is* new is how encompassing the issue has become. It comes at us from all directions—from the media, from doctors and medical professionals, from school administrators, from politicians, from *environmentalists*, for pity's sake. Practically every modern problem from the recession to climate change has at some point been blamed on fat. We're told that we're indis disciplined, gluttonous, lazy, that our children will be the first modern generation whose lives will be shorter than their parents' because of obesity. That weight issues rack up extra \$66 billion a year in healthcare costs, contribute to global warming, strain the world's food resources as much as an extra five hundred million people living on the planet.

Obsessing about weight has become a ritual and a refrain, punctuating and shaping every



relationship, including our relationships with ourselves. It's become social currency not just for women but for teens and even children. My younger daughter was fifteen when she told me (with a great deal of exasperation at my naïveté), 'Mom, fat-bashing is how girls bond with each other. I *have* to say bad things about my body if I want to have any friends.' And saying those 'bad things' to others reinforces our own inner critics, the ones that pick apart every outfit, that assess every inch of flesh, every blemish, every choice we make. We're so used to that constant inner judgement, we don't even think to question it.

What was once a source of personal anxiety and distress has morphed into an ongoing public dialogue. Just ten years ago, a Google search for the word 'obesity' returned about 217,000 hits. A similar search in just the first six months of 2014 turned up nearly twenty-seven million hits. Not that Google searches represent a scientific standard, but they do reflect a culture's pre-occupations—in this case, the reality that we're more freaked out than ever about how much we weigh and what our bodies look like. Many of us believe, as the Duchess of Windsor so famously said, that we can *never* be thin enough—and that if we're not thin, we can never be successful, desirable, lovable, or worthwhile, either.

Each of us thinks our obsession with weight and body image is ours alone. We blame ourselves for not being thin enough, sexy enough, shaped just the right way. We believe we're supposed to fit the standards of the day. And if we're not in the 1 percent of the population born with the body du jour, we feel it's our fault. We believe we can get there if only we eat less, eat differently, work out more, go vegan, throw up what we eat, give up gluten, take laxatives, fast, give up sugar, fill in the blank.

But the reality couldn't possibly get any clearer: *This is not a personal issue.* This is not about your

weakness or my laziness or her lack of self-discipline. This obsession is bigger than all of us. It's become epidemic, endemic, and pandemic. It comes from all around us, but it's dug its way deep under our skins, and it festers there. It's pain that involves our deepest sense of who we are in the world. We experience the world through our bodies, our skin and neurons and nerves. Other people see us only and always in the context of our flesh and bone and blood. How can you feel good about your essential self when you hate what contains it?

You can't, as it turns out. That's how I wound up in the therapist's chair, staring at her in disbelief, wondering if she'd lost her mind. And that's how I started on a journey that's put me into a completely different place. Along the way, my relationship with food started to shift, and so did my physical sense of myself.

It took years for my perspective to evolve, years of thinking and knowing before the feelings began to change. While I still occasionally react to food as if it were an enemy to be conquered, most of the time now I focus on what feels good—physically and mentally—rather than on weight. I eat well and enjoy what I eat. I take long walks and go for bike rides because doing those things makes me feel good, not because they burn calories.

What I've learned from this process has been shocking and enlightening, enraging and empowering. It has forever changed the way I look at myself and others, how I think about weight and health and food. There's no question that we need a different kind of conversation, one rooted in science and evidence and reality than blame and fantasies, our own and others'. This book, I hope, will help move us in that new direction.

Some of what you're about to read here may feel shocking to you, too. But I believe each of us deserves to hear the whole story. I encourage you to keep an open mind and, ultimately, come to your own conclusions.



REPORTS



News of Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, Kolkata conducted a round-the-clock medical camp during Makar Sankranti Mela at Sagar Island in South 24-Parganas district from 10 to 15 January 2016. In all, 5,419 patients were treated, out of which 55 received indoor medical care. Besides, 150 blankets and about 5,000 copies of religious books were distributed among the pilgrims.

On the occasion of Gangasagar Mela, **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Manasadwip** organized a camp at the Mela area from 11 to 16 January. In all, 1,175 pilgrims were provided with free board and lodging at the camp and the Ashrama. Besides, free meals were served to about 250 non-resident pilgrims daily. Discourses and devotional singing were also arranged in the camp.

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Mumbai celebrated the golden jubilee of its temple consecration ceremony from 24 to 26 January which was attended by 70 monks and nearly 50,000 devotees. The celebration was inaugurated by Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, in the presence of Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Gautamananda, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, and other monks and devotees.

Seventy-one students of class 11 of the school run by **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur** participated in the Junior Scholarship Test-2015, a competition for school students conducted by Jagadish Bose National Science Talent Search, Kolkata. Out of them, 26 students were awarded junior scholarship and 11 received junior encouragement award. Besides, the school

Foundation Laying of Vivekananda Jnanapith at Pune

won the Best School Award; In the 15th National Paralympic Swimming Championship held at Belgaum from 27 to 30 November, 6 students of the Blind Boys' Academy, 2 each in senior, junior and sub-junior groups, won 12 gold and 11 silver medals in different events. Besides, one student was awarded National Paralympic Champion Trophy for securing 4 gold medals in the sub-junior group.

Sri Devendra Fadnavis, chief minister of Maharashtra, laid the foundation stone for the proposed Vivekananda Jnanapith building at **Ramakrishna Math, Pune** on 3 January. The building will house three institutions, namely school of human excellence, school of languages, and school of Vedic studies.

A homeopathic dispensary and spoken English classes were inaugurated at **Ramakrishna Math, Puri** on 15 January.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Salem conducted values education programmes at six colleges in and around Salem district from 28 December to 22 January. In all, 1,300 students attended the programmes.

Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Science and Technology, visited Vivekananda Cultural Centre of **Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong** on 19 January.

Relief

Winter Relief · The following centres distributed blankets to poor people: **India: Antpur:** 1,000 from 1 to 30 December; **Baghbazar, Kolkata:** 250 on 20 December; **Baranagar Math, Kolkata:** 300 from 25 November to 7 December; **Chapra:** 160 from 30 December to 3 January; **Deoghar:** 1,110 from 27 November to 1 January; **Garbeta:** 540 from 11 November to 20 December; **Ghatshila:** 240 from 30 December to 5 January; **Jaipur:** 300

from 16 December to 5 January; **Kanpur**: 100 from 19 to 21 December; **Karimganj**: 300 from 29 November to 4 December; **Katihar**: 200 from 8 December to 11 January; **Khetri**: 50 in January; **Naora**: 1,100 from 26 December to 12 January; **Narottam Nagar**: 300 on 9 and 12 January; **Puri Math**: 730 from 6 December to 18 January; **Puri Mission**: 480 from 15 November to 1 January; **Rahara**, **Kolkata**: 334 on 1 January; **Saradapitha**, **Belur**: 250 from 6 to 31 December; **Shillong**: 250 from 25 November to 15 January; **Tamluk**: 700 from 21 November to 22 December; **Bangladesh**: **Dhaka**: 3,702 in December and January; **Dinajpur**: 876 in January; Total: 13,272. Besides, the following centres distributed various winter garments, mentioned against their names, to needy people: (a) **Garbeta**: 100 jackets from 11 November to 20 December. (b) **Limbdī**: 317 sweaters from 22 December to 15 January. (c) **Tamluk**: 100 wrappers from 21 November to 22 December. (d) **Dinajpur** (Bangladesh): 47 sweaters in January.

Flood Relief · Tamil Nadu: Four centres continued their relief operations for the people affected by floods. (a) **Chengalpattu** centre distributed 500 kg rice, 100 kg dal, 313 dhotis, 913 saris, 155 T-shirts, 926 mats, 913 bed-sheets, 600 bars of bathing soap, 700 bars of washing soap, 300 packets of washing powder, 300 tubes of toothpaste, and 1,200 toothbrushes among 943 families of 12 villages at Chengalpattu in Kanchipuram district from 24 December to 27 January. (b) **Chennai Math** distributed 600 utensil-sets (each set containing 2 cooking vessels, 3 plates, 3 tumblers, and 3 spoons) among 600 flood-affected families on 12 January. (c) **Chennai Students' Home** distributed 1,440 packets of cooked food, 43,001 kg rice, 3,621 kg rava (semolina), 13,702 kg dal, 505 kg assorted vegetables, 252 kg tamarind, 9,820 kg edible oil, 4,556 packets of spices containing sambhar powder, chilli powder, turmeric powder, coriander powder, mustard seeds, cumin seeds, etc, 5,824 kg salt, 12,663 loaves of bread, 5,624 packets of biscuits, 450 kg milk powder, 8,767 litres of milk, 14,367 kg sugar, 2,281 litres of drinking water, 7,382 cooking vessels, 14,652 plates, 14,652 spoons, 14,596 tumblers, 4,920 saris, 5,432 lungis, 3,117 blouses, 3,000 pants, 3,080 shirts, 1,208 T-shirts, 4,520 nightgowns, 8,040

blankets, 5,975 bed-sheets, 2,303 towels, 1,803 plastic sheets, 2,619 mats, 500 mosquito-coils, 4,048 stoves, and 300 solar lamps among more than 13,000 families of 186 villages in Chennai, Kanchipuram, and Thiruvallur districts from 26 November to 4 January. Besides, the centre provided medical relief to 2,930 flood-affected patients. (d) **Kanchipuram** centre distributed 1,000 pants and 960 shirts among 510 families of 5 villages in Kanchipuram district on 19 and 20 December.

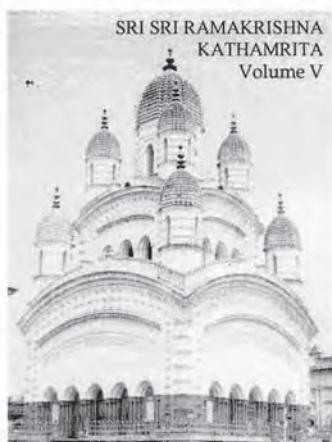
Earthquake Relief · Nepal: Continuing its relief work among the families affected by the devastating earthquake in April 2015, Kathmandu centre distributed 2,880 blankets and 845 plastic sheets among 1,440 families at Vajravarahi Municipality area in Lalitpur district on 19 and 24 January.

Distress Relief · The following centres distributed various items to needy people: (a) **Karimganj**: 230 saris and 175 dhotis from 29 November to 4 December. (b) **Limbdī**: 110 sets of children's garments and 110 slates on 15 January. (c) **Naora**: 3,400 exercise books, 4,400 pens, 2,000 pencils, 1,000 erasers, 1,000 sharpeners, 100 kg rice and 100 kg potatoes on 12 January. (d) **Nattarampalli**: 80 saris, 80 cooking pots, 160 kg rice, 80 kg molasses, 20 kg ghee, and 80 sugar canes on 14 January. (e) **Puri Mission**: 200 saris from 26 December to 1 January. (f) **Rahara**: 58 saris, 37 chaddars, 16 school uniform cloths, 194 mosquito-nets, 81 bed-sheets, 3 bicycles, 733 phials of coconut oil, 16 drawing books, and 12 sets of geometry box on 1 January. (g) **Rajahmundry**: 36 sets of school uniforms on 12 January. (h) **Silchar**: 2,800 saris, 800 dhotis, 200 chaddars and 250 mosquito-nets from August to December.

Hudhud Cyclone Rehabilitation · A multi-purpose building constructed by Visakhapatnam centre at Valabu village of Devarapalli Mandal in Andhra Pradesh was inaugurated on 6 January. The building will house a non-formal education centre and will also be used for conducting medical camps, tailoring classes, and other purposes.

Economic Rehabilitation · The following centres distributed various items to poor and needy people: **Jammu**: 10 sewing machines on 31 December; **Khetri**: 84 sewing machines on 1 January; **Rahara**: 1 sewing machine, 3 cycle-rickshaws, and 1 rickshaw trolley on 1 January.





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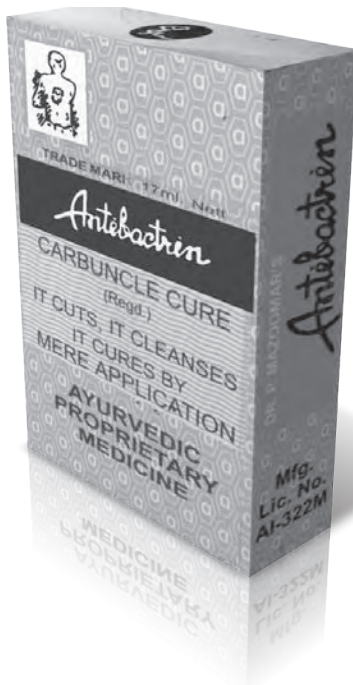


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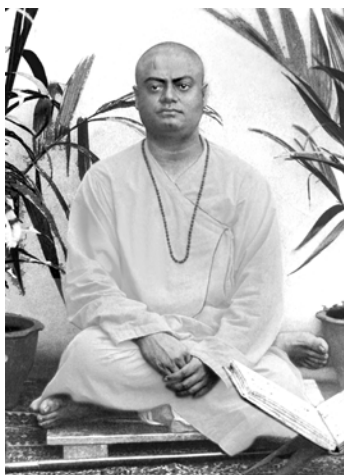
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Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Eng)	05 – 19 May	18 to 50	Rs. 3000/-
Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Hindi)	05 – 19 May	18 to 50	Rs. 3000/-
Yoga Instructors' Shibir (Eng & Hindi)	05 May – 03 June	18 to 50	Rs. 6000/-
Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Marathi) @ Nashik *	16 – 30 May	18 to 65	Rs. 2000/-
Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Hindi) @ Kashmir **	20 – 29 June	18 to 50	Rs. 3000/-
Spiritual Retreat (Eng)	08 – 14 Aug	18 to 60	Rs. 2500/-
Spiritual Retreat (Hindi)	08 – 14 Aug	18 to 60	Rs. 2500/-
Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Eng)	01 – 15 Dec	18 to 50	Rs. 3000/-
Yoga Shiksha Shibir (Hindi)	01 – 15 Dec	18 to 50	Rs. 3000/-
Yoga Instructors' Shibir (Eng & Hindi)	01 – 30 Dec	18 to 50	Rs. 6000/-
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Spiritual Retreat (Eng & Hindi)	4 - 10 Feb	18 to 60	Rs 2500/-

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We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

— Swami Vivekananda



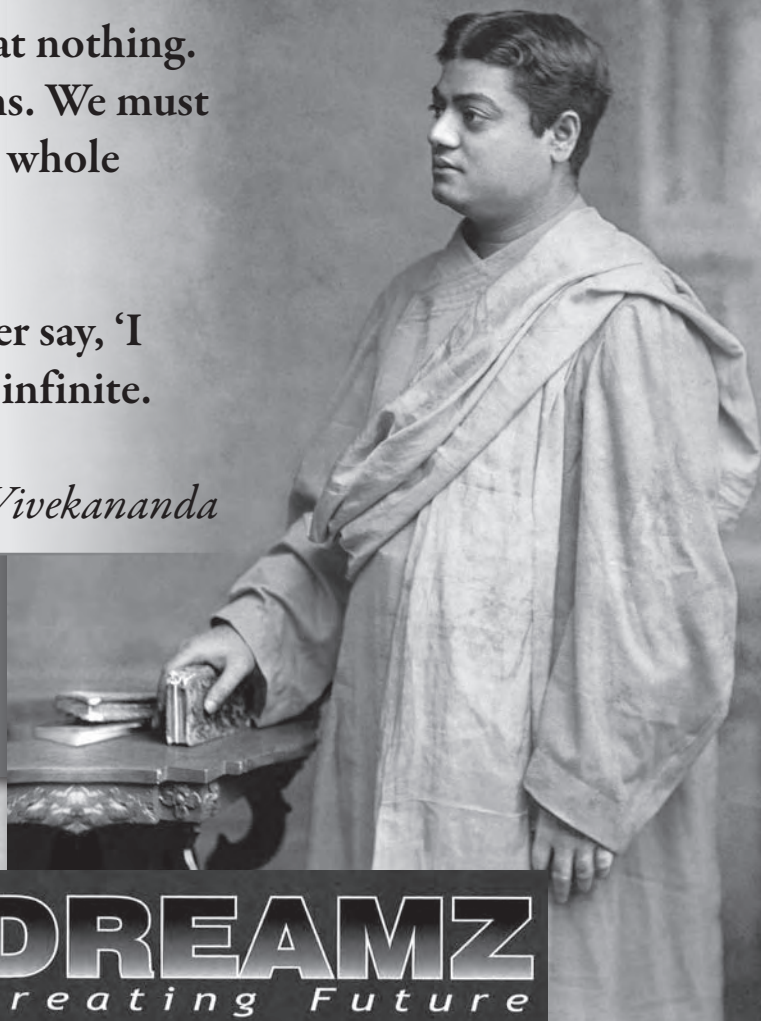
Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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The best guide in life is strength.
In religion, as in all other matters,
discard everything that weakens
you, have nothing to do with it.

—Swami Vivekananda

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E-mail : rao@svisslabss.net Web Site : www.svisslabss.net

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